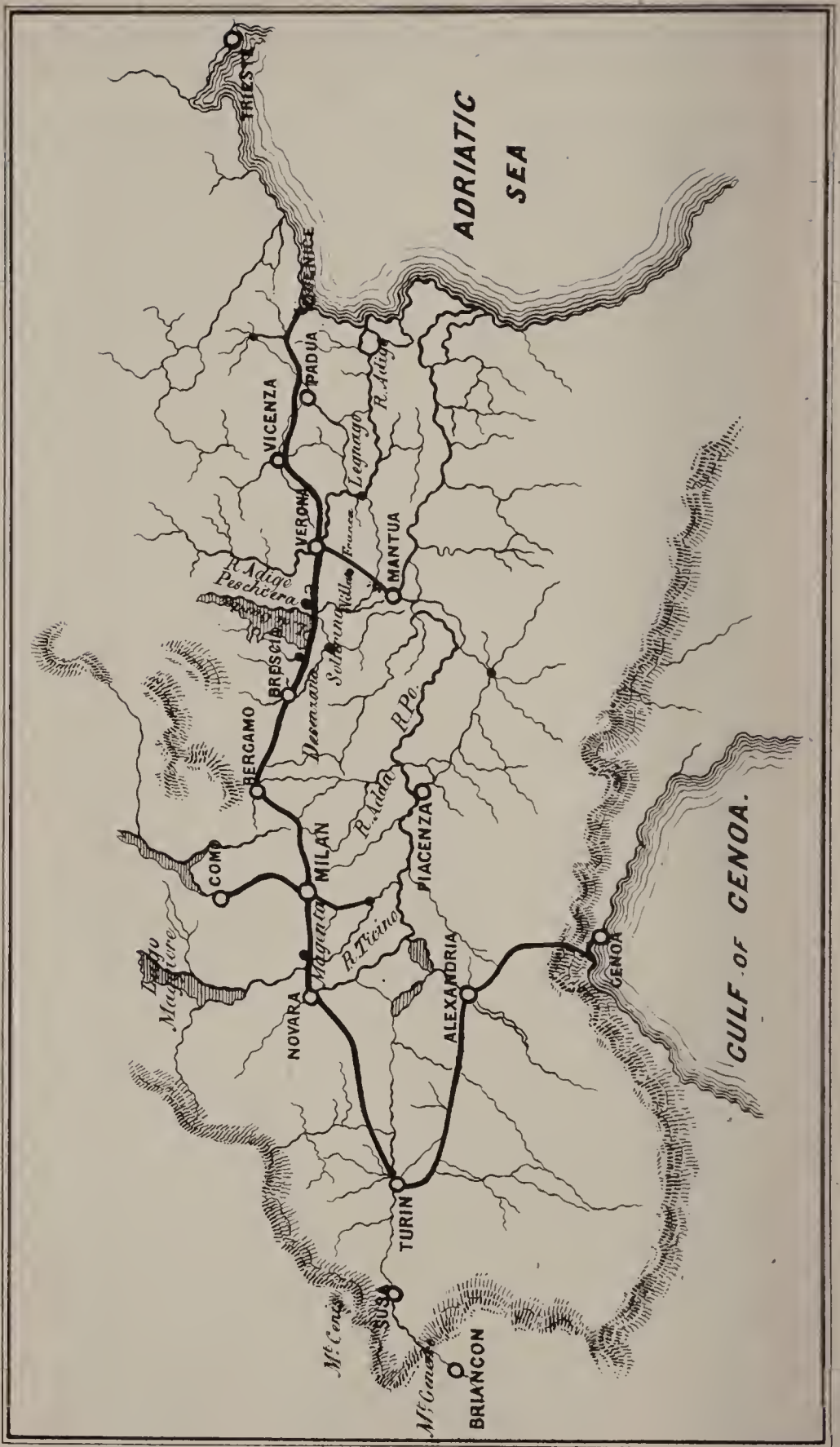


Class DG 601

Book .E 69

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TO VENICE AND BACK

In an Hour.

BY

T. W. ERLE.

PARTS OF WHICH WERE READ AT

THE CUCKFIELD READING ROOM,

FEBRUARY 11, 1860.

IG-601
E69

LONDON :
J. CHISMAN, PRINTER, ALBANY STREET,
REGENT'S PARK, N.W.

31127
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YH 4.001 27
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Dedicated

TO

ELIHU BURRITT,

BY HIS OLD FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.

“ TO VENICE AND BACK IN AN HOUR.”

I am not going to give you a lecture this evening. Not a bit of it! You have already had during this season a sufficient quantity of tough food for your minds to debilitate the stoutest intellectual digestion. Hydrostatics was rather a stiff business, and the subject of coins, though mollified for you as much as could be, was after all a grim sort of customer to tackle. So by way of as complete a change as possible, I propose to take you to Venice and back in an hour, killing the journey with nothing but gossiping extracts, taken just as they stand, from a couple of journals and a

collection of old letters from Italy. Any additional matter will be attired in the most undignified language which occurs to me, and if I become occasionally trifling, not to say silly, that will merely be fulfilling my deliberate intention. You have been patient listeners, so to speak, on several occasions at the Polytechnic, let us now have an evening together at the Adelphi. So you need not shrink with any apprehension of history or statistics. There are at least a score of books in this room which will abundantly supply all such particulars to any of you who have a taste that way. I shall only tell you a little about some of the places you have heard so much of lately, for were one to attempt to enumerate a tithe of the objects of interest which “engage the attention of the curious traveller,” as the guidebooks say, in such a country as North Italy, the descrip-

tion would run on for ever like the legendary "cork leg." "A curious traveller," by the way, is always suggestive to my mind (which obstinately persists in taking the whimsical view of everything which may be susceptible of being regarded in any such light) of the Wandering Jew, or a crab whose course of progression is a diagonal sidle, or of the earlier types of locomotive steam engines. It will be explained to you why the battle of Solferino was fought on that particular spot, and why its issue was such as you know it to have been. Beyond this, I shall speak as little as possible of the late war and its attendant horrors, for to one who has lately seen something of them in the shape of an apparently endless multitude of maimed and tortured wretches, these are not by any means refreshing subjects to dwell upon.

It will be proper to begin by telling you

what are the shortest ways of getting from London or Paris to Turin. One route is viâ Marseilles, and thence by sea to Genoa; a second is by Chambery and over the Mont Cenis, which was the road by which the bulk of the French army poured into Sardinia last spring; and a third is by Lyons, Grenoble, and Briançon, over the Mont Genève to Susa. (Routes shown on the map). This last road is the shortest of the three, and beyond all comparison the most picturesque and beautiful, but the portion of it between Grenoble and Briançon, though begun by the first Napoleon, is still incomplete.

Some years ago I happened to be at Grenoble* with an English family of my

* The Convent of the Grande Chartreuse, as everybody knows, is near Grenoble, and "the thing to do" is to go and stay there for a night, and be called up to see the monks at midnight mass. An Englishman of abject vulgarity, but deli-

acquaintance who had set their hearts upon taking this direct route to Briançon, but our innkeeper informed them that their heavy carriage of Long Acre manufacture could not be dragged thither through the bogs and other difficulties which it would have to encounter, by less than eight horses. Thereupon they dispatched me to the residence of the principal posting master of Grenoble, who lived on the outskirts of the town, to bargain for the necessary amount of horse power. Monsieur was upstairs over the stable in bed, his leg having been broken by a kick from one of his own posters. He declined to undertake the journey with less than sixteen horses. No doubt the thrilling

ciously comic in his manifestations of the excess of the quality, politely invited himself to supper with me at Grenoble, and described his impressions of the midnight scene at the chapel in question in the following terms. "I 'eard the old beggars howlin' away, and kickin' up such a dismal row. Jest sor em at it, and then turned into bed agin."

effect of my eloquence upon him must have been in some degree weakened by the circumstance that it had to be aimed at him through the keyhole, as he would not unlock the door, and of course the beauty of the graceful and impressive action with which the delivery of the address was accompanied, was wholly lost to him through the same circumstance. And on my returning an hour afterwards with a reply from the owner of the carriage that the sixteen horses were to be got ready, he then said that the team, or a part of them, might indeed perchance reach Briançon, the wheelers with the shafts, or some fractional portions thereof, still adhering to them, but that no earthly vehicle, unless specially built for the purpose, could possibly live through the first stage; and in short that he would not undertake the enterprise on any terms. So I went by myself, the

only passenger in an institution on wheels, constructed for this particular service. It was before the subsidence of those destructive inundations at Lyons which you must remember reading of some years ago. The few bridges which remained about that part of France were left in a very paralytic and debilitated condition, and the roads were nowhere particular. We started at dusk, and a violent storm of thunder and lightning, accompanied with drowning floods of rain, raged the whole night. We were continually obliged to get out and walk ahead of our vehicle while it passed some point where it seemed more particularly likely than elsewhere that it might plop into the water and get playfully whisked away by the torrent into the Mediterranean. And occasionally the driver called upon me to hold the horses while he moved the larger stones out of the way, every

thing smaller than an ordinary bandbox being disregarded by him.

It may be remarked in passing, that few weapons are more handy to fight the smaller battles of life with than a collection of silly old songs known by heart. If it be not a particularly dignified employment under agitating circumstances of any kind to be occupied with thinking what queer old jingle is most applicable to one's position for the time being, it is at any rate better than biting through one's under lip, which with some people is the only other alternative. The observation is suggested to me by the accidental recollection that during the night I am describing, on having to hold the horses at a point when the chances seemed unpleasantly in favour of our all being washed away together, the only thing which disturbed my equanimity was the circumstance that

nothing but convivial ditties, and one in particular about drinking champagne on Indian ground, or something of that description, would keep coming into my head. For by no effort of ingenuity could these be considered as otherwise than eminently inapplicable to the existing state of things. At last it happily bethought me of "The Derby ram" and that

" The boy who held the dish, Sir,
Was carried away in the flood."

The felicitous aptness of this passage preserved me in a state of radiant and genial gratification, until the next serious contretemps which occurred demanded a fresh antidote of the same description.

The circumstance of our actually reaching Briançon, after accomplishing the journey of fifty-four miles in exactly seventeen hours and

three quarters, was the more gratifying from its having been wholly unanticipated. We must not linger too long on the northern side of the Alps. Briançon however is so singular a place that a hasty sketch of it may be properly introduced. Imagine a town about the size of Cuckfield, built on the slant of a steep hill, and shut in on all sides with an irregular fence of bare and rugged mountains. The effect of being for ever immersed, so to speak, in mountains, as is the case at Briançon, is dispiriting and oppressive to the last degree. Only a comparatively small piece of sky can be seen, and the morning and evening rays of the sun are utterly blocked out. Plato in his *Phædo* ventilates some extravagantly absurd theory about our being all down at the bottom of a well. An approximation to the reality of such a position may be found at Briançon. Perhaps

it never struck you till this moment what an advantage we enjoy in the situation of Cuckfield, through which we command such a fine spread of sky, together with opportunities for contemplating meteoric and atmospheric effects of all kinds on the grandest scale. We have magnificent Claudes and Turners in the morning, glorious prismatic Cuyps at midday, and rich and glowing Danbys at sunset, presented with a completeness of effect which is hardly known elsewhere.

The lower declivities of these Briançon Alps are all glare and flame with the tropical sun of that district, while their harsh and jagged peaks, inlaid with glistening streaks of perpetual snow in their rifts, stand cut out in clear and sharp relief against the deep ultramarine blue of the sky of southern France. On the ledges of the ascents more immediately adjacent to the town

are perched a series of strongholds one above the other, fort upon fort, and battery upon battery, rising en échelon to so great a height, that when you apply to the Commandant of the garrison for leave to visit the works, it is not improbable that with the usual courtesy of Frenchmen he will warn you that the day's labour which it would cost you to toil up to the topmost posts would not be compensated by the view to be obtained therefrom. Any hostile force which should attempt to make its way through such of the defiles about Briançon as are within reach of its guns, would need, as you may suppose, some stouter defence than even a Mrs. Gamp umbrella to protect itself from the iron shower which would be plunged upon it from above. It is fortunate for us that the fortification of Cuckfield is not likely to form a part of the system of national defences, since

residence in a walled town is occasionally most inconvenient. If a person who happens to live at the lower edge of Briançon wishes to take a five minutes' stroll into the fields, he must make his exit for that purpose by a gate which is at the very top of the town. On the way to this he has to struggle up a steep hill bristling with a pavement of sharp stones of such exceeding and intense angularity, that the ancient ordeal of walking over hot ploughshares must have been simply a luxurious refreshment to tender toes as compared with the agonies to which he will be subjected in the prosecution of his enterprise. An entry occurs in my journal dated Briançon, Hôtel de la Poste, which may be useful as a warning to any of you who may travel that way. It is as follows. "This Inn possesses an interest of its own in having achieved a triumph of filthiness which even

German establishments, notwithstanding the proficiency of that people in turning themselves into swine, cannot hope to rival. Every plate is embellished along its edge with a series of representations in bas relief of the waiter's thumb, and he would be indeed a man of a bold and adventurous temperament who should venture into a bed here." The Hotel de l'ours, a queer little place not mentioned by Murray, in a back street which didn't seem to have any particular name to speak of, seemed much better. I am no gourmand, and therefore have not the odious habit to which too many travellers who ought to know better, are addicted, of chronicling bills of fare, unless it be for the sake of any comical features which they may happen to possess. So the Briançon commissariat must have struck me as funny, since my journal contains the following entry. "What

a request for a 'petit dîner' at the Hôtel de la Poste at Briançon produced. 'Soupe,' consisting of water diluted with something even weaker than itself, and in which a poultice appeared to have met a watery grave. French beans of the size of young cucumbers. Pommes d'amour, vegetable productions so red and wrinkled as to be vividly suggestive of washer-women's thumbs. Trout of much the same dimensions as those used for counters at whist. A cube of beef, of the size of a die, and about as hard. Two chickens, not quite as large as sparrows, one roast and the other boiled. Compôte of wild gooseberries from the adjoining mountains. Wine of puritanical-old-maid acidity. 'Voilà tout M'sieu.' "

The walk from Briançon over the Mont Genève through woods full of deliciously sweet lavender and moss, and wild gooseberries no

bigger than peas, but exceedingly nice in their way, and thence onwards for a dozen miles or so towards Susa, through such scenery as Beverley never dreamt of, and all this in the society of a companion whom to know is indeed to admire and love, was—well I mustn't go on about that.

If you adopt the other of the overland routes to Susa which I mentioned, namely that *viâ* Chambery, you will get by railway as far as a place called St. Jean de Maurienne (here on the map) where you must disembark into a diligence. Many of you, no doubt, have never seen a diligence, so this picture of the article will interest you. The railway is eventually to be carried through the Alps by a tunnel eight miles long. Some weeks ago however the chief Sardinian engineer, Monsieur Melly, to whom the conduct of the work was confided, was

drowned in a flood. It will no doubt eventually be accomplished, but the difficulties which have to be encountered, as detailed to me by Madame Melly, are more serious than is generally supposed. The mention of Madame Melly, one of the pleasantest travelling companions whom it has ever been my good fortune to be thrown with, reminds me that if you wish to polish up your recollection of any foreign language which you may not have used for some time, the best plan is to talk it resolutely, whether you can or not, to somebody who can speak nothing else. Madame's whole stock of English consisted only of "ow dee doo" pronounced in the most comical manner that ever was heard; it would have tickled Miss Miggs into a smile. But it was with difficulty that she could be persuaded to repeat it for my entertainment, having till then fostered the conviction that it was a

naughty oath, or at any rate some expression of a profligate and reprehensible character. The difficulty which attends the first resumption of an unaccustomed language probably arises in a great measure from one's having lost the habit of *thinking* in it. If this be so, it would seem to form a corroborative illustration of the fact stated by Dr. Roget (whose name cannot be quoted by me without at least some expression of admiration and respect) in the preface to his Thesaurus, that thought and expression are pretty nearly convertible terms. For obvious reasons, hardly one person in a thousand will be prepared to admit that people who cannot write and speak with imagination, force, and clearness, are correspondingly barren, weak, and confused, in thought. But it is most unquestionably true, for all that!

The Mont Cenis, from the facilities which

the particular conformation of its surface happens to afford to the mountain blasts to sweep unchecked, and of which they avail themselves with a very unpleasant alacrity, is notoriously the coldest of all Alpine passes, and if crossed at midnight in September it will be found decidedly "fresh." One is apt to get alternately baked and frozen in travelling, after the fashion in which Milton in *Paradise Lost* describes the bad angels as having been bothered. Do not impute to me disrespect, or even levity, in speaking in such a tone as this of the finest epic in the English language. Its beauty is sullied by unworthy passages such as the one referred to, and most of all by the description of the invention of artillery, which I forbear to characterise by the only terms which could properly be applied to it. Read and judge for yourselves if it is not so. But to

return to the Mont Cenis. The diligences, for four started together, crawled slowly up the ascent, each of them drawn by two horses and eight mules, while the air resounded with the drivers' exhortations to their cattle of "Hue! Brrrrr-i-gand! zacccecr-é nom de Dieu!" and other expletives of which the French fraternity of the whip and spur are wont to avail themselves as safety valves for letting off the surplus steam of their energies in moments of difficulty or excitement. And the rattling volleys of cracks which they so assiduously sustain with their whips under such circumstances, suggested what the explosion of a firework manufactory must be when it comes to the cracker department's turn to go off. Meanwhile your humble servant in the "banquette" was frozen stiff and stark, although enveloped in three coats, two shirts, two neckcloths, two pair of—well—

I spare you further detail, and will simply remark that my general condition was that of being swathed like an Egyptian mummy, or immersed in clothing like a Dutch heiress on becoming a bride. In Holland it is, or was, the custom for a bride's dowry to be invested in petticoats, and that she should stagger to the altar banked up in the whole collection. The introduction of crinoline must, one would suppose, have occasioned some modification with respect to wearing the entire wardrobe at once, since the result would be, in the present fashion of female attire, portentous. A Dutch bride indeed would be even as Primrose Hill. "In-star montis," like the Trojan horse. The practice is a commendable one, since the husband is for obvious reasons effectually precluded by it from converting his wife's fortune to his own purposes, and marriage settlements are thus

rendered unnecessary. Well, it was much too cold to sit still, so I got down and performed a sort of fandango all the way up the ascent alongside the dil, in the vain endeavour to lance a little warmth into my body. It was a very animated and graceful little performance no doubt, but fulfilled its intended object only indifferently, for notwithstanding the vigour of my gymnastics, I remained as cold as a slug, and continued frozen up as hard and stiff as if I had been a statue of myself done in stone, until arriving at Turin.

The heat of Turin in summer would cook a salamander, or to adopt the most forcible illustration which occurs to me, although it is of a figurative character, would melt the heart of an overseer. Astronomers tell us that in some planets, as for example, Mercury, which are very near the sun, iron, if it be found there at

all, must be always in the form of a red-hot liquid. There are similar grounds for supposing that during the summer months at Turin butter and lollipops cannot exist otherwise than in the shape of fish sauce and syrup respectively. And a very fat person who should visit Turin during the great heats might reasonably apprehend getting subjected to a material change in his personal identity by being metamorphosed into a stream like Acis, or subsiding into the heels of his boots and elapsing there-out as a soup, or evaporating in the form of an unctuous mist. Yet Turin is a pleasant place at all times. It is very clean, and cheerful, and well-paved, and you may walk throughout it under arcades. In all the streets, too, which run north and south you have a refreshing view at one end of snowy mountains, and at the other of undulating heights clothed

with handsome timber and sparkling with villas. Candour won't let me give the Po a good word. It is green and stagnant, and otherwise unprepossessing in appearance. Upon closer investigation, too, it would probably be detected as sharing with Father Thames his characteristic foible, that of an objectionable smelliness. This view (a picture) of Turin is exceedingly accurate and effective.

The railway from Turin to Milan passes through Novara (shown on the map) where, as you will remember, Charles Albert and his Sardinians were defeated in 1849 by the Austrians under Radetzky. It soon afterwards crosses the Ticino, which divides Lombardy from Piedmont. The first station on the east of the Ticino is Magenta. You cannot have forgotten the account of the battle which took place there, so it is unnecessary for me to repeat

its details. At the time of my visit many traces remained of the encounter. The railway bridge still lay in the stream, and the wooden structure which had been temporarily substituted for it betrayed such symptoms of paralytic infirmity when trains passed over it, as were not reassuring to the passengers. A house also might be observed which had so many dents and holes in its front that it looked like a magnified nutmeg grater, or as if it had been suffering from an attack of small pox, or labouring under that most formidable of all depressing maladies, the Court of Chancery. There were also some mounds surmounted by rude crosses, marking the pits to which the slain of both sides had been consigned. A dog of African breed which had belonged to General Espinasse, lurked for many weeks about the spot where his master

was killed, and though often taken away to some distance, constantly returned. Travellers passing through Magenta are, as of course they will be for years to come, beset by a legion of ragamuffins old and young, offering veritable bullets from the field of battle for sale. There cannot be a single water pipe left within a dozen miles of Magenta, since the run upon lead to supply the material for the manufacture of these relics must have been so active and exhaustive.

From Magenta an hour or two brings you to Milan, which, like the rest of Sardinia at the time of my last visit, was all flags and exultation. This (picture) is a very good view of Milan. Its famed Cathedral forms, as you observe, the most prominent feature of the city. It would be very easy to go off into a sort of paroxysm of architectural ecstasy about this

cathedral, and startle you with an account of the number of statues it has, and how it is built of white marble, and I don't know what all; and the views of it would seem to account for any fervour of eloquence on the subject. But with all the deep appreciation with which I am gifted for the glories of architecture, and which is indeed a blessing to be thankful for, since it forms a source of unfailing enjoyment of the highest kind, yet it must be confessed that Milan cathedral does not, at least externally, impress me much. The general squatness of its form, and the multiplicity of pinnacles, communicate, be it spoken with all proper respect, something porcupiny, not to say hedgehoggy, to its general effect. The great Western façade is a mere uncomfortable jumble of every style of architecture from impure Gothic to pure Brixton, reminding one of the tableaux which are dis-

played over travelling penny shows, painted in square compartments, each compartment exhibiting some misbegotten enormity or other. And lastly, the marble of which it is constructed was once upon a time, no doubt, white, but the same thing is true, in a highly conventional sense at least, of a postboy's hat. The last-named article indeed, when spattered with yellow slush from some of our clayey lanes down in these parts, and weatherstained all sorts of colours, would convey a very fair idea to you of the hue of the marble of Milan Cathedral. The inside of the Church, of which this is a view, is very imposing from its vast and unincumbered space, its solemn grandeur, and the brilliancy of its stained glass. Public worship at Milan Cathedral is conducted with more simplicity than is usually the case in Roman Catholic temples of such magnificence.

What is called the “ Ambrosianus cantus,” or, the form of musical service introduced by St. Ambrose, is adopted. St. Ambrose was Bishop of Milan in the fourth century. He was at first a heathen, and a lawyer, and held some office in the government of the province, analogous to that of the Attorney General in this country. Eight days after his baptism he was consecrated bishop of Milan. Sir R. Bethell preached such a good sermon the other day at Wolverhampton on christian charity, that one is led to suppose that the practice of exchanging the silk gown for lawn sleeves might still be occasionally resorted to with advantage to the community. Sunday is observed as strictly at Milan as the sternest of dyspeptic Sabbatarians could require.

The railway from Milan to Venice passes through Bergamo and Brescia, both of them

splendid towns, and each containing objects of great interest which time does not allow me to particularise here. It terminates for the present at Desenzano (here) on the Lake of Guarda, the portion of the line between that place and Peschiera having been broken up during the late war. Solferino is about five miles from Desenzano, and its famous tower is a prominent object of the country south of the railway. Most of the views of the various scenes at the seat of war which appeared in the periodicals last Spring were singularly true to the reality. The descriptions of towns were in some cases, as of course was to be expected, incorrect in details. For example, Turin, Susa, and Milan, were each of them frequently described as strongly fortified. Now there is not a single gun at any one of those places, nor any defensive works whatever. The war maps have now lost

their interest. Still, it may be worth while to mention, in case any of you should be meditating a tour in North Italy, that for general purposes you cannot have better or cheaper maps of the country than those which were published as supplements to *The Dispatch* newspaper, the paper and supplement together costing fourpence.

It would be too lengthy a task to describe to you the course and various battles of the late campaign, even if it could be supposed that the newspapers had not already supplied you with sufficiently detailed accounts of every thing that took place. Besides which, the terms of our programme restrict me to scraps picked out of journals, and old letters written from the scenes referred to, and among these, of course, long extracts from *The Times* describing the various actions, could not possibly have place. But

since the interest of the bloody drama which was so recently played on the Italian stage culminates at the Solferino scene, I may endeavour to give some few additional touches of reality to the picture of the spot which you must each of you have formed in your own minds, by describing its more prominent features as they caught my observation. The Austrians, as you know, had been defeated in all the preceding battles of the campaign, and retreated, occasionally fighting, but never making a resolute stand with their whole force, till they reached Solferino. And the reason they selected a position there for their final effort was this. This Alpine barrier (shown on the map) which forms the boundary of Lombardy on the north, encroaches, as you see more and more, as it runs eastward from Como, upon the plain, until, as will be explained to

you more fully presently when we come to speak of the position of the four fortresses, an army advancing upon Venetia from the west would have, on reaching the vicinity of Solferino, to move almost immediately under the southern slopes of these mountains. Just at this point, a short succession of spurs, or roots, as they might more properly be called, of these Northern Alps, run due southwards, and after rising and falling irregularly, like great green waves in a chopping sea, eventually sink into the plain. Nearly at the southern extremity of the longest of these spurs, and on its topmost eminence, stands the village of Solferino with its conspicuous tower. The Austrians occupied the whole ridge, their right extending as far as the lake of Guarda. The village of Solferino, as being the highest point, and commanding the lesser elevations adjacent

to it, was of course the key of their position. The Allied camp was on the next parallel series of heights to the westward. The first shock of the battle took place in the valley between the two lines, and the fiercest and most obstinate struggle was of course for the possession of the village of Solferino, upon which the issue of the battle depended. You know the result. Owing to a misfortune, the only serious contretemps which has occurred to me for many years in travelling, and which was entirely the work of those never-sufficiently-to-be-anathematised Austrian officials, I was hurried on my journey without having had time enough to get quite up to the tower of Solferino. But I walked over a great part of the field of battle, and the rest of it was easy enough to be seen. It was difficult to imagine that so tranquil a spot had lately been the cockpit of two

empires. Everthing was peaceful and smiling. The farming people were engaged in their ordinary avocations just as if nothing had happened. The vineyards were alive with legions of dragon flies, big, bold, busy, buzzing, fellows, of the size and bulk of humming birds, who whizzed by me like squibs, while every bank was peopled with lizards of three different hues, who darted about with the rapidity of momentary flashes of colour. It would sound odd to pass abruptly from the battle of Solferino into an episode of natural history, although the subject of lizards is a favorite one with me, after conducting the education of specimens of three or four genera of the tribe with much interest and success, but if any of you possess a vivarium, it will give me great pleasure to tell you at any time what treasures may be obtained for it from Solferino.

I had reason to apprehend that *my* bones also might be left to whiten on the field of Solferino, for while walking about there, a prodigious mastiff with great glaring eyes as big as the gooseberries called “Brompton prize-takers,” a gaping mouth, as frothy as if he had sprung up from the consumption of a soufflée to finish his dinner on me, and a throat red and awful like the passage to purgatory, made hostile demonstrations, and came and walked close behind me, growling in a fashion which kept me in a state of palpitating agitation on reflecting how extremely thin my trousers were, and that if any deplorable impulse should seize him to make a meal of animal sustenance off my person, I had no means of gainsaying him.

After returning from Solferino to Desenzano, a drive of eight miles brings you to Peschiera. It was expected of course by the Austrians

that Louis Napoleon would be after taking French leave of “adopting” Peschiera, and therefore every thing along this road, which would have been his line of approach to it, was put in applepie order to give him a warm reception. The nature of these preparations had an additional interest for me, as giving suggestions, which may possibly prove handy some day, as to the best mode of doctoring our Sussex roads under a corresponding state of circumstances. In the first place all trees, shrubs, and other objects in or near the line of advance of the enemy, and by which his approach might be in any degree masked or protected, were laid low. This precaution, it may be added, was also taken by the Austrians with respect to the whole of the ground lying around their fortresses which was within the sweep of the guns from the walls, so that almost as many mulberry

trees as men must have fallen victims to the war. Trenches and mounds were run at right angles to the road for some distance in each direction, the carriage way itself being blockaded with what are called "gabions," which may be described as short and fat cylinders, about three feet high, and eighteen inches in diameter, made of hazel twigs, and filled with earth; hampers, in short, with no tops or bottoms to them. These afford a very tolerable protection from musket balls. The immediate vicinity of Peschiera presented a curious sight. The frontier line dividing the positions which were respectively occupied by the contending armies at the moment of the abrupt cessation of hostilities, and which has since been confirmed as the permanent boundary between the Austrian and Sardinian territories, passes close under the walls of Peschiera, so close indeed

that the waste of overthrown trees, which, as I said, marked the range of the guns of every Austrian fortress, extended to a considerable distance within the Sardinian limits. At the time of my visit the line was dotted out by a succession of little huts made of boughs and dry reeds, about which a few officers in the familiar blue Sardinian uniform were lounging, looking rather bored perhaps, but otherwise comfortable enough, while at the distance of a few yards from them, a large detached fort, forming one of the exterior defences of Peschiera, was crowded with scowling Austrians. A field a little way off to the north, whose hedge on its western side had just been promoted, doubtless to its great surprise, from the simple office of curbing the excursive impulses of the donkeys turned out to graze there, to the more dignified position of forming the boundary

between a kingdom and an empire, was peopled with the blue-legged and white-jacketed myrmidons of Francis Joseph going through the everlasting drill which is their doom, and glittered with flashing steel like the plain where Cadmus sowed the dragon's teeth.

An Austrian soldier's existence is one long, dreary, unintermitted, never-ending, drill. Any one who has ever passed a week at Vienna can testify that this is so. The troops display as deep a melancholy as is susceptible of expression by the human countenance, but if there are any especial moments when they contrive to look more abjectly woebegone than usual, these are during drill. Now every one with a spark of humanity in his composition must have felt sorrow enough at the thoughts of the multitude of poor ignorant rustics, knowing nothing whatever about anything at all, and devoid of

any one single idea or interest in life beyond cheese and potatoes, who were swept up from the wilds of Bohemia and the distant plains of Hungary, from “where their rude huts by the Danube lay” to be mashed, and hacked, and battered, by ferocious Zouaves and bloodthirsty Turcos, and have their limbs torn off by the latest new infernalities of modern artillery, or their bodies run through with those nasty-looking wavy long knives of the Chasseurs de Vincennes, or be starved to death through the incapacity of Giulai, Schlick, & Co., and be subjected to other grave personal discomforts. But in perfect seriousness, one’s horror at these things is materially qualified by the consideration that the life of an Austrian private soldier is one of such utter joylessness that it can be but little loss to him, poor fellow, to be deprived of what it is no pleasure to keep. The struggle

by troops of this description, as jaded and dejected as Legree's slaves, against lusty and well-equipped, and well-fed, French "braves," resembled in more points than one a contest between a badger and a pugnacious terrier upon the question whether the former is to be forcibly extracted from his earth. He, poor fellow, only wants to be let alone to mumble his roots, and have his naps in quiet, and scratch himself at leisure, but if attacked, he curls himself up in his earthwork, exhibits a very uninviting cheval de frise of sharp teeth, and although overcome by the physical superiority of his assailant, dies game to the last. His aggressive enemy Mr. Pincher is also, on the other hand, no bad type of a rough and ready Zouave, always panting to "go at" something or other, and with an inclination, sometimes inconveniently developed in practice, of even raising a domestic tumult

in his master's house by polishing off the cat or otherwise, if no more unexceptionable safety valve for his combative impulses is supplied to him.

Peschiera is one of the famous "Quadrilateral" of fortresses which constitutes the military strength of Austrian Lombardy. It is not to be supposed that any of you can have been so dull and indolent as to have failed to inform yourselves of the meaning of a word which became so familiar and had so important a significance during the war that if you did not understand it, you can hardly have read a single line of a newspaper all last spring with any intelligence. But the main use of a lecture, on whatever subject it may be, being, for the most part, to put before people more clearly, or concisely, or fully, or at any rate a little differently, what they knew before, I will give

here a short summary of what the "Quadrilateral" implies.

Well then, you will observe by this map that at the point where this fortress of fortresses, as one might call it, stands, the Lombardo-Venetian territory is narrowest, the Tyrolean Alps advancing far into the plain. Their southern promontories, indeed, extend to within twenty-five miles of the Po, and thus greatly circumscribe the ground which is available for military operations, and open to the advance of an invading army. To limit an enemy's attack to a particular point is an advantage in itself, but still more so when, as in the present instance, it offers special obstacles to his progress, for two important streams here intersect the plain between the mountains and the Po. The first of these which an invader would have to cross is the Mincio. This river issues from

the lake of Guarda at Peschiera, runs between steep banks in a south-easterly direction, and is an unfordable and rapid stream for twenty-one miles of its course. Diverging at last into many branches from whose intricacies the city of Mantua derives its inaccessibility, it wanders amid impracticable marshes till its confluence with the river Po. Twenty-five miles to the eastward of the Mincio, the second river, the Adige, emerging from different Alpine passes, intersects the city of Verona at the immediate base of the mountain range, and flows, like the Mincio, to the south-east. After a course of twenty-five miles, it makes, at the citadel of Legnano, a bend more directly towards the east, the ground now intervening between it and the Po being for some distance a continuation of the marshy region that generally borders the latter river. Thus you will observe

that this Austrian fortress is of a rhomboidal or lozenge-shaped form, averaging twenty-five miles to a side, the acute angles being on the north-west and south-east. The east and west boundaries being deep streams, the north side is mountainous, while to the south it is an impassable swamp. The only bridges over the Adige and Mincio are at the angles of the rhomboid, and these are commanded by first-class fortifications. Peschiera guards the head of the Mincio, while Mantua, at the other extremity of the line, is not only rendered impregnable to an enemy, but fatal to the unacclimated by its position among marshes and its unhealthy atmosphere. At the head of the Adige, Verona, besides its regular fortifications, has an entrenched camp within which fifty thousand men might manœuvre, and being placed at the intersection of the Tyrolese and Venetian rail-

ways, it readily obtains munitions and reinforcements at need; while the communications with Legnano are secured by a road running between the Adige and a deep canal whereon troops can move as safely as by a covered way. A railway also ensures a rapid intercourse with Mantua. To attempt, then, to force the passage of these streams in the presence of the formidable force they inclose, protected by citadels which mutually support each other, would be hazardous in the extreme; since the troops occupying the interior can be rapidly and safely concentrated on any point menaced.

People may speculate for ever, for the question can never be authoritatively answered, whether the Allies, if they had not been arrested by the peace of Villafranca, would have made themselves masters of the Quadri-

lateral. My own opinion is that they would. Elaborate estimates may be made of the comparative resources of the contending armies, but the paramount consideration seems to be the spirit with which they were respectively animated. What is a body, however big and burly, without a heart? And the contrast between them in this respect was so striking, that it could not but be obvious, even to the most unmilitary observer, that hardly any superiority of numbers however great, or the protection of ramparts however formidable, would have compensated for the utter discomfiture and dismay which prevailed in the Austrian army. Not a man of them at the time of my visit but showed in his face the most abject and spiritless despondency. And no wonder. It was of course easy to meet with and talk to any number of intelligent

men, soldiers and civilians, who had seen or been engaged in the whole campaign. Solferino was described to me by the colonel of the tenth regiment of the French line, who was in the thick of it all, and also by a Venetian employed in the Austrian commissariat department, who was a spectator throughout the whole struggle. Their accounts, like those of all other persons without exception who had opportunities of observation, were identically the same. The Austrians were beaten at every point of warfare. The French rifled guns threw shot and shell even into their reserves, while their own artillery was incapable of replying at half the distance. Then, their men were half-starved. The service of the Commissariat was so ill-conducted, that on several occasions the wretched troops after marching, or fighting, or doing both alternately,

during the whole of one of those long, exhausting, hot, summer days, got nothing at all to eat or drink until the following day at noon, and then perhaps only coffee. No wonder that under such circumstances, faint as they were in heart and body, they should have been swept from their positions by the whirlwinds of fierce Zouaves which rushed upon them. And as if all this was not enough, they were so miserably handled in battle, through the incapacity of their commanding officers, that fatal confusion was a common occurrence. The resolution with which they stood up, awaiting death almost passively, to be knocked down like so many ninepins, was worthy of admiration and respect. They could not of course but see in their own officers their worst enemies. Even three months after Solferino, the disorganisation of all public arrangements which prevailed still uncorrected

within the Austrian frontier continued to attest the degree of breathless exhaustion to which the Government must have been brought. Within the Sardinian borders, on the contrary, except for the radiancy of people's countenances, all was as if nothing had happened, and wounded men were not to be seen.

In speaking of North Italy, whether strategically or otherwise, constant reference must be made to the rivers, since they form so prominent a feature of its geography. The following translation by Addison of some lines of a poet named Claudian may help you to remember the names of five of the principal streams. The translation, by the way, is a great improvement on the original.

“ Venetia’s rivers, summoned all around,
Hear the loud call and answer to the sound ;
Her dripping locks the silver Tessin rears,
The blue transparent Adda next appears ;
The rapid Adige then erects her head,

And Mincio rising slowly from his bed ;
 And last Timavus, that with eager force
 From nine wide mouths comes gushing to his course."

The Adige is the only great river in Lombardy which does not fall into the Po.

Peschiera, in a military point of view, is well enough, no doubt, in its way, but the dismalest abyss of ennui which a hapless traveller could tumble into. It hardly amounts to a town, since it consists only of a few houses, with two small inns, and a square of barracks, the rest being all fortification. At the time of my visit to it, there was no regular service of trains to Verona, the proceedings of the railway, like all other public arrangements at this date, depending on whatever orders the military commandant of the district might vouchsafe to give from day to day. On my arrival there about noon, it appeared there was to be no train eastward that day, and

that the only escape from an entombment in Peschiera, in a state of fret and desolation for twenty-four hours, was to take a carriage to Verona. The distance was only a dozen or fourteen miles, which would have been, as indeed it proved, a pleasant little stroll enough on foot, but an old traveller would no more think of parting company with his portmanteau than he would of going out for a walk without his boots. My Italian however having become inconveniently rusty, and there seeming to be nobody in the place who understood a word of anything else, it was difficult to conclude a satisfactory bargain for a vehicle. In this dilemma it bethought me of the Austrian chief of police at the passport office, who must of course be able to speak French, so I went and soft-sawdered him wholesale, and got him to treat for the carriage for me,

which he accomplished to my entire satisfaction. Possibly he was tickled with the idea of the utter effrontery of anybody's asking an Austrian functionary (the stiffest and most conceited cockscombs as is) to do such an undignified little job. Perhaps he looked upon "Signor Airly" as a queer fish altogether, because on arriving at the passport office earlier in the day, the said Signor vaulted out of the carriage without opening the door, and entered hat in hand with a pantomimic salaam, quite a choice little bit of "comic business" in its way, and worthy of W. A. Barnes, so he took me no doubt for a travelling harlequin. He urged me to stay the evening at Peschiera, possibly with the mercenary view of getting invited to dinner, for my belief is that an Austrian would do any little job likely to conduce to his own personal

advantage, from stealing a spoon, upwards ; or downwards, if there be any still more unbecoming achievement than that. So it became necessary to quench his importunities by saying, “But, my very dear Sir, if I hang myself through ennui, as I undoubtedly shall, in your delightful city, about half after nine this evening, what good shall your train tomorrow do me?” He felt the cogency of this line of argument, and altogether we were so amicable that at parting he grasped my hand with a fervid gush of cordiality which was quite affecting, and perhaps just a little wee bit comic also !

Verona is an important and magnificent, as well as an old, and very interesting, city. Its situation at the foot of the Rhoetian Alps, and on the banks of the rushing Adige, is remarkably fine. It communicates with Austria by

two lines of railway, namely, that to the Tyrol along the Adige, and that to Venice on the way to Trieste. Not only has it fortifications of enormous strength, but great field works are thrown out before the main defences, so that it makes one creep to think of the wholesale slaughter and manglement which would be involved by any attack upon it. It would take me a whole evening to describe to you properly the antique stateliness of the city, which impressed me more in that respect than any town I ever was in. It is distinguished, too, as the birthplace of many celebrated men, but in point of interest to English people what are all the famous characters who ever lived there to those who *never* lived there ! For the action of three at least of Shakespeare's plays is laid wholly or in part at Verona, and a more poetical scene could not

have been chosen. There is a sort of dreamy old-world magnificence about the place which one would suppose ought to be inspiring enough to turn even an Austrian drill sergeant into a "bard of Adige." But if any of you go there, you need not feel bound by way of doing the "whole duty of tourists" to visit the tomb of Juliet. For the alleged repository of whatever was mortal of that illstarred young lady was within the memory of living people a horse-trough, which was appropriated to its present office of representing her tomb for the purpose of adding an additional lion to the legitimate sights of Verona, and thus forming the means of transferring a certain number of small silver coins from the pockets of credulous English travellers to those of the local valets de place. The only trace now remaining of the Capulets is their badge, a cap, carved in stone

over the inner entrance to the courtyard of a house formerly belonging to them, and which is now a diligence office.

The most striking feature of Verona is its old amphitheatre, the finest, excepting only the Coliseum, which exists. Those ancients did their public entertainments on a grander scale than we do, for this amphitheatre is said to contain accommodation for sixty thousand people, or about a dozen Drury Lane-fulls. An opening is made available to me by the mention of an amphitheatre for the introduction of some amazingly fine and thoughtful moral sentiments with which the subject is susceptible of being embellished, and which indeed it seems to invite. I abstain, for reasons of my own, from favouring you with any such reflections at this moment. You will recollect also that Childe Harold is accessible to you here. In strict adherence to

the express design of this lecture, we must be anything but solemn, or even serious, this evening. During the late war, theatres, churches, and any other public buildings which afforded convenient room for stowage, were adopted without the slightest scruple, as they happened to be required, for hospitals, magazines, and other military purposes. The principal modern theatre at Verona was turned into a store of soldiers' boots. So a small wooden playhouse had been constructed in the pit of the old amphitheatre. Taking some little interest in dramatic matters, I attended a rehearsal there. It was very difficult to hear what was said, but there was evidently a leading lady in the Vestris line (in the technical language of the Italian stage an "amorosa,") and there was a regular Tilbury-heavy-father. There appeared to be two "walking gentlemen" or "amorosi," who, so far as could be gathered

from the aspect of their proceedings, were engaged in a competitive process of impressing upon the heavy father each his own superior recommendations as the more eligible candidate for the hand of the amorosa his daughter, he meanwhile sitting grim and judicative in a chair. The lady appeared to evince no particular interest in the transactions which were going forward, so it may not unreasonably be surmised that the course of the piece, had I stayed it out, would have brought to light a third, and more favoured, amoroso, not a hundred miles off all this time, who in the penultimate scene would have surreptitiously elapsed with her, she having in the usual manner squeezed herself into his arms through a practicable window in the third flat ; the last scene being of course devoted to the happy reconciliation of all parties, and paternal-emotion-business by the heavy father. There is

nothing new under the sun,* for a London cabby's figurative language to me of "about arf past eleven ven the theaytres bustis" may be viewed as a tolerably close reproduction of the idea residing in the term which expressed the exit places of an ancient amphitheatre. They were called the "vomitoria." The word interprets itself sufficiently by its sound to spare me the ungraceful duty of translating it for you.

There is a famous fish market at Verona. Such markets out of Whitechapel (but that exception is an emphatic one) are to my taste very pleasant spectacles, since fresh fish look so bright, and cool, and clean. Here were pike in their coats of delicate gray shot with that peculiar green of which they appear to enjoy a monopoly; grayling in their armour of silver

* Except, as in travelling one sometimes finds to one's cost, continental bread, which appears to be a tenacious compound of oakum and birdlime.

scales ; tench as golden as if from the Pactolus, and looking like shapely nuggets of bullion ; carp, too, which one might almost have imagined susceptible of coining as they lay ; glittering dace from the Adige, and a variety of other finny beauties which were strangers to me, but all shining as energetically as if they had just been steeped in a strong solution of liquid sunshine. There were frogs, too, for sale, ready skinned for cooking, and looking in that condition quite indelicately naked. There is also a very good fruit market at Verona. In the great heat of Lombardy, pears must be regarded as the most valuable item of the commissariat. They are sold by weight. Those green melons with the red insides which look so dreadfully like animal flesh, seemed to be a staple article of commerce. They recalled to my remembrance the appear-

ance presented by the sectional views of the policemen who are annually cut in half in the comic business of pantomimes.

There are current in Venetia certain disreputably dirty pieces of money whose name at this moment I forget, but they are so obliterated and generally low in quality and condition that it is much more easy to fancy them to be squashed pewter buttons, or cartridges cut out of a lead pipe, than the veritable coinage of a realm. It used to afford me some little amusement to give one of these pieces to the old women at the fruit stalls, and see what it would produce in the pear line. Thereupon ensued an elaborate process of weighing, resulting occasionally in some slight perplexity if the pears proved unaccommodating in making up the precise value required with sufficient exactitude. If in the eventual issue

the proper tale of fruit could not be exactly squared with the amount received, it is pretty safe to conclude that the buyer didn't get the benefit of the doubt ! unless human nature at Verona is a wholly different article, and commercial morality there of a diametrically opposite complexion from what they are universally elsewhere. The pieces of money referred to are supposed, but the assumption is an extremely violent one, to be silver. It is very difficult in some other particulars to accede to the views which you are invited to take of the Austrian currency. You frequently get a large coin, thin no doubt, but of rather imposing girth, and which therefore ought to go for something. Owing however to its depreciation, which arises from the unscrupulous way in which the Government has doctored the currency, it is difficult enough to determine its

precise value even within its own proper sphere of circulation, and it would prove an extremely fruitless enterprise to attempt to arrive at more than a rough approximate conjecture of its equivalent in English pence. So that it is a little disappointing to find by practical experiment how little your unknown coin will bring you in return for its value had and received. Its nominal worth is found to bear the analogous ratio, in point of insignificance, to its actual value, which the professions of sanctimonious or strictly “particular” people commonly do to their practice. While we are on the subject of Austrian money it may be mentioned that the fourpenny bank notes which formed the staple of the Imperial small currency some years ago, have now ceased to exist. They have been replaced in Austria proper by other paper, nominally of a higher value, but inasmuch as

the national exchequer displays an indefatigable ingenuity in continuing for ever to discover deeper and deeper abysses of discredit to plunge into, it is impossible to pronounce at any given moment what may be the reciprocal relations which may chance to exist for the time being between the legal symbols of value and the amounts which they are supposed to represent. When a gentleman has had the misfortune to go in a pecuniary sense “to the bad,” or, as might be said in an aggravated case, “to the worse,” or “worst,” it doesn’t much matter to you what figure his I O U which you hold may bear. So, also, if a beggar gives you a cheque, the amount is immaterial; you may, as in the case of a decimal fraction, freely add an indefinite number of ciphers to the right of whatever sum may be indicated by it without in any degree affecting its value thereby. Those four-

penny bank notes used to constitute the recognised tariff of remuneration for all small services, from securing from the chambermaid at your inn the indulgence of a second half-pint of water for the more satisfactory prosecution (in adherence to the odd prejudices of Englishmen with reference to occasionally washing their hands) of your toilet operations, up to facilitating your passage through the passport office. When staying at Vienna some years ago, I received one day a peremptory summons to appear at the police office at ten o'clock on the following morning in order to be verified by my passport. Happening however not to wake until eleven, I looked in in a friendly way somewhere towards half-past two, being then, no doubt, a trifle overdue. The chief official got up a good deal of sternness on the occasion, and betrayed a tendency to make difficulties and delay, but

knowing of course perfectly well what it all meant, I quietly slipped one of the fourpenny bank notes into the book at which he was writing. The little attention was acknowledged by a bow of such dignity and gracefulness as would have done credit to a pupil of Talma or Mr. Henry Bland, and my little matter was disposed of at once with very gratifying courtesy and dispatch. The effect of the vicissitudes of rough service upon these notes, which were replaced but sparingly by fresh issues, was to reduce them to the discoloured and unwholesome appearance of a slut's curling papers. Those which chanced to be subjected to trituration by the horny hands of the crones in the markets, passed gradually through the phase of dirty lint into that of tinder, and thence to a brown fluff. It was my practice to carry in my waistcoat pocket, for casual purposes, a little ball of

them rolled up like a walnut. It occurred to me that in the event of the waistcoat getting wet through, my money would have to be extracted by a spoon in the form of a chocolate-colored mucilaginous paste, resembling the contents of a medlar, or a small linseed poultice. Their condition is in some degree paralleled by that of the notes of provincial banks in England, whose existence is spent in a continual passage through the leather-breeches' pockets of the agricultural interest. From the close companionship into which they are thus brought with nuggets of cheese, stray snuff, samples of corn and guano, onions, and shag tobacco, a composite aroma, indefinite perhaps in its precise character, but very pronounced in degree, is found to attach to them. They also not unfrequently may be observed to be dappled with transparent spots characterised by an

unctuous glistening peculiar to themselves. The origin of these spots may be traced to the notes having been brought into contact on their travels with bacon, or sausages, or the like, on occasions when Farmer Turmuts, their proprietor for the time being, has considered it expedient to make provision for satisfying the calls of a somewhat peremptory appetite which is apt to occur at unexpected moments, by victualling a portable magazine with a store of animal sustenance. The Germans are no less provident than the British farmer in this respect, as appears from the following passage in Tennyson's "Idylls of the King,"

“ For your German from home
 When preparing to roam
 Gets out his best suit, and proceeding to stock it,
 In his coat puts his pipe,
 With some meals of cold tripe,
 And a lump of bad baccy in each breeches' pocket.”

The country as you proceed eastwards from

Verona becomes, if possible, more smiling still, and the vines are hung from tree to tree in long festoons which present a far more picturesque appearance than do the emaciated ghosts of starved raspberry bushes which to all appearance form the usual constituents of a vineyard elsewhere. Without violating the terms of our agreement about abjuring statistics this evening, I may, and ought, to give you a slight sketch of the agricultural condition and aspect of North Italy. The great Lombard plain which stretches from the Alps to the Adriatic (shown on the map) is the most highly cultivated, and, in proportion to its extent, the most densely populated spot in Europe. Its chief productions are Indian corn, rice, wine, and silk. The remarkable vigour of fertility which distinguishes it arises from the circumstance that strong heat and abundant moisture, the two main stimulants

of vegetable energy, are there combined. You must all know what “water-meadows” are. We have none in Sussex, but they are very common along the course of streams such as the Itchen in Hampshire, and you know how supernaturally luxuriant and vividly green they are. So green indeed are they, that if a painter were to represent one on canvass in its true colours, as it actually exists, cockney critics, unacquainted with the original, would be sure to say that he had tried to improve upon nature. And the crops seem to succeed one another at intervals of about ten minutes or so all through the warm weather! Well, this Lombard plain is one vast, natural, ready-made, water-meadow. For in the valleys and recesses of the Alps which fringe it upon the north continuously, and throughout its whole length, lakes are formed by the melting of the snows and

by the drainage from the higher grounds. The overflow of the water which is thus constantly gathering into these natural reservoirs, is carried off by a system of waste pipes in the form of rivers, which, almost without exception, traverse the plain in a due-southerly direction, and pour their contributions into the river Po, which in its turn pays them over to the Adriatic. A series of parallel channels having been thus supplied by the accidents of the geographical structure of the region, all that was required to render them equivalent in value to the golden stream of the Pactolus, was the simple alchemy, first, of supplementing the main arteries by a subsidiary system of small veins for distributing abroad their liquid treasures, and secondly, of shaping the whole surface of the district into smooth facets, as diamond polishers call them, of the proper inclinations for being alternately drained

and inundated, as required by the varying exigencies of agricultural operations. The heat by which vegetation is spurred into a gallop, and by which even that sobersided old party the domestic cabbage is kept in a fiz of hot excitement, is of course the free and unstinted gift of an Italian sky. It is, indeed, as rhetorical housemaids say of their feelings, “more than pen.” The sun seems to rain down a torrent of fire “*potentius ictu fulmineo.*” Last season was an unusual one, and this Lombard plain, which in the mildest summer is like Darius’ burning fiery furnace, was last September heated seven times hotter than it is wont to be heated. No weather of any kind ever affects my arrangements in the smallest particular. But it cannot be denied that an apprehension did occasionally suggest itself that the case of the prince in the Arabian Nights who travelled into the kingdom

of the sun, where the heat upon his head was so great that he could distinctly hear his brains boiling, might not impossibly be paralleled by the occurrence of a corresponding phenomenon in my own person. It would be natural enough to expect to dig up one's potatoes ready baked, where the ground is but live embers. The crops are arranged with unvarying and most monotonous regularity in an endless succession of oblong patches, after a fashion of which the key board of a piano may perhaps be taken as an illustrative representation. Pictures of hedges may possibly exist as curiosities in local museums, but they are otherwise unknown in Lombardy. Timber trees are grown on the lower declivities of the Alps, but none on the plain. The white mulberry, which is planted in rows bearing about the same proportion in point of number to the other crops as the sharps

and flats do to the rest of the key board of a piano, looks almost too artificially symmetrical to be a downright offspring of nature. It reminds one of the trees known to boxes of children's toys with those supernaturally regular stems capped by balls of wiry verdure which are mathematically accurate spheres, and all as undistinguishably like one another as a file of policemen. These mulberry trees are not so nice as our mulberry trees, inasmuch as they bear no fruit. They are cultivated only for their leaves, on which silkworms are fed. A disease has lately appeared among silkworms which in some parts of the south of Europe has destroyed them wholesale. Great anxiety prevails in Lombardy lest the plague should give them a call there. In the event of its doing so the disaster will be a serious one, since the value of the raw silk now pro-

duced there is nearly £4,000,000 a year. The grape disease has already proved a heavy calamity, for the loss which Venetian Lombardy has sustained through it has been nearly £3,000,000 during *each* of the last six years. And this, too, in a country whose population is considerably greater in proportion to its extent than that of any other district of Europe. The trunk roads of Lombardy are famous, such as a Telford might be proud to own. I abstain from telling you the exact sum of money which has been spent in the last twenty-five years in bringing them into the consummate apple pie order which now distinguishes them, for fear of laying myself open to the impeachment of dealing too much in statistics.* They form a very striking contrast to the channels of transit which we enjoy down here in Sussex. I use the

* It is £1,350,000.

term “enjoy” only in the peculiar and idiomatic sense in which, according to the expression used in this county, a person is said to “enjoy” bad health, or by a common mode of speech, is alleged to “rejoice” in the name of Buggins. The delight which transitive verbs are stated by the old Eton Greek grammar to feel in the particular cases of the substantives which they govern must also doubtless be viewed as a correspondingly tranquil form of gratification. The main roads here are decent enough it is true, but our lanes, in which you plunge about, distressed in body and disheartened in mind, immersed up to the eyebrows in a squishy, yellow, glutinous, slush, of preternatural tenacity, are abysses compared to which the slough of despond of the Pilgrim’s Progress was a billiard table or a Dutch floor. There are but few secondary roads in Lombardy, and carts are seldom seen,

since the whole country is treated as a garden, and its cultivators carry all that is to be taken to or from the land on their heads. The women are quite as staunch at heavy labour as the men. I don't know whether Miss Proctor considers it to be in accordance with woman's mission to become a female navvy. The result upon the feminine form is to make it as muscular and stringy as a drayman's, or Cuckfield mutton, and from the same cause the faces of the fair sex are as brown and wrinkled as Normandy pippins, or a Chimpanzee's hands.

On approaching Venice, if you keep your head out of the railway carriage, as probably nobody could help doing, to catch the first sight of the famous city, you will see the object of your pilgrimage right out at sea, and that your course thither by railway is across a bridge two miles and a half long, and strongly fortified. On

my arrival at the terminus, the satisfaction which would naturally have attended the circumstance of finding oneself for the first time actually at Venice, was deferred for a while by the absorbing spectacle of wounded soldiers which the station presented. Our train brought three or four luggage vans full of such as were unable to sit up, while about the same number of third class carriages were charged with a similar freight of victims not quite so helpless. These however bore traces of having undergone a pretty considerably rough tattooing at the hands of ferocious Turcos and remorseless Chasseurs d'Afrique. Every train at this time which arrived at Venice brought its miserable cargo of suffering wretches. It is very easy—nothing apparently can be more so—for we constantly see it accomplished by such stupid people, to set oneself up, by the delivery of a

few hackneyed platitudes about the horrors of war, on a sort of sublime height above the rest of the world, of elevated philanthropy. My own taste certainly does not lie that way, and I would much rather incur the imputation of offending in the opposite direction, namely of being thought to speak with unbecoming levity of serious and touching things. But on seeing, even so late as three months after the absolute termination of hostilities, a sad, slow, tide of wounded men, in piteous suffering and disfigurement, still ebbing, and that without sign of cessation, from the shores of a certain Red Sea, this, even more than the mounds of Magenta and Solferino, eloquent as they were of "the butcher-work that there befel," made it impossible to help feeling that of all Imperial pastimes war is the most objectionable. Congresses and international arbitration won't

do much for the preservation of peace. A philosopher in petticoats, Jeannette, has suggested the only arrangement which would indeed put an effective extinguisher on the flame of military ardour of aggressive potentates when she says

“O! if I were Queen of France, or, still better, Pope of Rome,
I would have no fighting men abroad, no weeping maids at home;
All the world should be at peace, or if kings must show their might,
Then let them who make the quarrels be the only ones who fight.”

It may be remarked here, in a short parenthesis, that the parting of a soldier bound for the wars, from his wife or sweetheart, is a subject which has proved the source of the happiest inspiration to two poets separated from one another by an interval of between two and three thousand years. I refer to Hector and Andromache, and Jeannette and Jeannot. “Jeannette and

Jeannot!" some of you may exclaim, "the most childish and the most hackneyed ballad that exists!" No doubt it is. The childish simplicity of its thoughts and language are precisely the points wherein its charm resides, and as for its being hackneyed, why of course it is, and so it must be, until to have a heart which can be touched by pure and natural pathos has become an exploded fashion. So much for my moralizing on war!

The actual reality of being at Venice is brought home to one's mind on leaving the station by the circumstance of having to ship oneself and portmanteau on board a gondola instead of an omnibus for transport to the hotel. The extreme quietude of the place, all the streets being of course silent highways, has a dreamy and impressive effect. You seem to have entered a sort of mesmeric atmosphere,

such as must have prevailed within the magical hedge of thorns where Rosebud and her establishment took their hundred years' nap. A carriage and horses would be the objects of precisely as much astonishment at Venice as would attend the appearance of a gondola in Piccadilly. Many of you may be already familiar from pictures with the look of a gondola. Here is a print, and also a model of one. You remember Byron's description of the article,

Did'st ever see a gondola ? for fear
 You should not, I'll describe it you exactly :
 'Tis a long covered boat that's common here,
 Carved at the prow, built lightly, but compactly,
 Rowed by two rowers, each called " Gondolier,"
 It glides along the water looking blackly,
 Just like a coffin clapt in a canoe
 Where none can make out what you say or do.

And up and down the long canals they go,
 And under the Rialto shoot along,
 By night and day, all paces, swift and slow,
 And round the theatres, a sable throng,
 They wait in their dusk livery of woe,
 But not to them do woful things belong,
 For sometimes they contain a deal of fun,
 Like mourning coaches when the funeral's done.

The gondolas being all painted entirely black within and without, and being also covered with a serge wrapper which in appearance is first cousin, if not own brother, to a pall, present as funereal an aspect as if each of them were a veritable Charon's wherry. This sable uniform was prescribed by the sumptuary laws of the stern old Republic, for it seems that the merchant princes of ancient Venice were apt to display a somewhat excursive taste in the adornment of their gondolas. The injunction has been renewed by the Austrian police on another ground, which is this. Before the present government succeeded in ousting every single Venetian of any consideration whatever from the place, and in quenching the last feebly glimmering hopes of nationality, the grandees of the city, such as they were, used to "sport their colours," as English prizefighters do theirs

with their handkerchiefs, upon the rich silk coverings, and other appliances, of their gondolas. So the Austrians, who go upon Sir Peter Laurie's principle of "putting down" everything which is susceptible of being forbidden, whatever its merits may be, pronounced these colours to be employable as seditious ensigns, and enjoined the existing one universal black livery for the gondolas, which makes them look like so many floating hearses. Their attire of mourning weeds is now but too much in consonance with the present condition of Venice itself, and the spirits of its miserable citizens. A gondola is the snuggest thing in the world to be ensconced in, and of course a jolt is impossible. But its strongly-accented staccato method of progression, consisting as it does of a continuous series of jerks forward upon receiving successive impulses from the oars, is excessively unpleasant.

I much prefer the more equable prestissimo of a Hansom, the allegro con brio of a Dublin car, or the comfortable and tranquil andante of that interminable Thames-Tunnel-or-arcade-upon-wheels a Parisian omnibus.

Danaeli's Hotel, where I established myself, is the Mivart's of Venice, and good, but dear. Its situation, looking, as it does, over the Lagune, is unrivalled. But it is the very head quarters of mosquitoes, and those, too, of the perversest and most aggressive description. According to the theory of the "Vestiges of Creation," nature supplies every animal with anatomical arrangements adapted to fulfil all the exigencies which will be incident to the circumstances of its life. If this be true, Venetians generally, and the inhabitants of the edge of the Lagune in particular, should have been furnished with claws for accomplishing the eternal scratching

which an existence passed in the midst of a cloud of brisk mosquitoes must naturally involve. Usually it is very easy to checkmate the miscreants by the following tactics. When you go to your bedroom at night, shut the window, because the candle gives notice of your whereabouts to all the mosquitoes of the district, and of course it would be impossible to cope with the enemy, if renewed swarms in inexhaustible numbers were permitted to come up fresh and fresh to the attack. Then shake the curtains to dislodge any of the rascals who may have settled there. Then go round the room with a candle, carefully examining the walls and ceiling, and wherever you see a mosquito, give her a delicate pat with the sole of a slipper, or the back of a hair brush, so as to squeeze her out quite flat. This will keep her perfectly quiet, and there is no difficulty whatever in exterminating

the plagues in this manner, since they remain quite still to be “patted.” It cannot be denied that the walls and ceilings are not improved by becoming dappled with the little red spots which are the result of the course of action above described, and which are suggestive of the apartment having come out with an eruption of lively nettle rash, but nobody’s scruples on this point would survive a night of exposure to mosquitoes. Besides that, the probability is that you will only be adding some additional layers to the rich stucco with which similar operations on the part of preceding travellers have already plastered the walls. But the rooms at Danaeli’s are so high, that after attempting in vain to reach the ceiling by means of a scaffolding of miscellaneous furniture, which proved to be an enterprise fraught with peril arising from the precarious stability

of the structure, I was obliged to lie down in presence of the enemy, with as forlorn a hope of any rest as if a Mrs. Caudle, armed with a paper of pins, and in the worst of tempers, had been the sharer of my bed.

There were three Americans at Danaeli's who appeared to have joined company in travelling on the strength of an acquaintance on the part of all three with one Brown. It seemed that the account given by Brown on his return home of all that he had seen and done on his travels must have been what incited them to follow his example. For their staple subject of conversation was what Brown had done, and what he hadn't, and considerable warmth of argument sometimes ensued when their opinions proved to be at variance on any point in this question. It appeared to me that it would have been difficult to invent any more unprofitable or silly

topic to which the continued attention of reasonable men could by possibility have been addressed.

I happened to arrive at Venice very ravenous just as the table d'hôte was beginning, and so was tempted to join the other guests thereat, but to sit interminably to listen to a parcel of affected nonsense talked by a set of excruciatingly vulgar English, just as one arrived at *Venice*, was more than human nature, at least as it is developed in me, could endure, so I surreptitiously elapsed, and in a few minutes found myself leaning over the parapet of the Rialto. Most people have heard of the Rialto, and the idea of it is connected in their minds with something beautiful or romantic. It is a melancholy duty to have to demolish those agreeable impressions, but it will save any of you who may hereafter visit Venice some disap-

pointment to learn beforehand that the Rialto is an exceedingly ugly structure, not so large, as it seemed to me, as one arch of Blackfriars Bridge, and that if you stand upon it to muse upon Venice and all that sort of thing, you will find it very difficult to disconnect your meditations from the subject of the overwhelming smelliness which prevails on the spot. It has a double row of mean shops upon it, of the Ratcliff Highway stamp, where miscellaneous vulgar articles, such as coarse cotton handkerchiefs, twopenny corkscrews, and boots like miniature barges, are sold. The backs of these shops are of boarding, or some untidy and unsubstantial-looking material, which of course presents an uncomfortable appearance as viewed from the water on either side. Having thus been compelled by the necessity of adhering to truth to do the Rialto a bad turn by painting it in its real

light, that of an extremely ugly little structure, I must go still further, and dissipate the interest which it probably holds fraudulent possession of in your minds as the place where merchants, as it would seem from Shylock's words,

“ Signor Antonio, many a time and oft,
In the Rialto you have rated me ”

were wont to congregate in the days when the leviathan grandees of Venetian commerce were not, as they have now come to be, costermongers of the Whitechapel stamp, and a few old apple-women. The “ Rialto,” when etymologically dissected, means “ the high bank,” one of the quays on the Grand Canal, which was, and still is, a favorite rendezvous of the Venetians, and where stands the Exchange.* But it is quite another

* “ I sotto portichi sono (1580) ogni giorni frequentati da i mercatanti Fiorentini, Genovesi, Milanesi, Spagnuoli, Turchi, e d'altre nationi diverse del mondo, i quali vî concorrono in tanta copia, che questa piazza è annoverata fra le prime dell' universo.”

thing from the bridge of the Rialto, which only leads to it, but which has now somehow or other slipped into a felonious usurpation of the meaning properly to be connected with the name. The Rialto “where merchants most do congregate,” if it had been only the bridge, would have afforded so limited a space available for any such meeting, that one might just as well talk of the Cuckfield rifle corps “congregating” in a sentry box. The other famous bridge of Venice is The Bridge of Sighs, here, in this picture, and so called because it was over it, or rather, through it, for it is a narrow covered passage, that prisoners were taken from the old prison to the Hall of Judgment in the Doge’s Palace. It hardly amounts to our idea of a bridge, since its span, as far as I recollect, is not above twelve feet or so. Besides these, there are between three and four hundred little

bridges in Venice, by means of which you are enabled to walk from any one point to any other point of the town, if you wish it. It will usually, however, be shorter to go by water, since the Grand Canal, which wriggles tortuously through the city, as you observe in this picture, is spanned by the Rialto only. To a man of active habits who can appreciate the luxury of a brisk walk, and who has no taste for lolling listlessly about in a boat, Venice would be simply intolerable as a residence, consisting as it does of a labyrinth of narrow, stuffy, and crowded, alleys, whence but a very thin slice of sky can be seen, and where the air has a certain taste and feel which may be described by saying that it seems as if it were but a second-hand article. So that pedestrianism in Venice doesn't come to much, and consequently it is to be supposed that the shoemaking trade can evince but symptoms of

as low and languid vitality as one would think must attend the proceedings of the “leather breeches makers to the Queen” whose advertisements are so startling in the picture which they suggest to the imagination, of Her Majesty—well—perhaps upon the whole it is as well that this sentence should remain unconcluded.

The first thing to be done on getting into a strange city is to go to the top of the highest tower it contains, and thence take a survey of things in general, and get acquainted with the local geography. Here is a good bird’s eye view of Venice. This (shown in the picture) high bell-tower is just the thing for the purpose. The panorama of the city as seen from this point, lying embosomed in the sea, with its suburbs occupying adjacent islands, and the low shores of Lombardy in the distance, is magnificent and unique. At your feet is the Piazzetta

San Marco, with the cathedral at its northern end, the old palace of the Doges forming its eastern side, while on the south are those two granite columns, pictures of which are to be seen in almost every print shop in the world. One of them is crowned by the lion of St. Mark, and the other by the figure of St. Theodore. Set at right angles to this square is a large oblong space, very much like the Palais Royal, only handsomer. These two great squares, since they are the only large open expanses of terra firma which the city can boast of, must have been of old brilliant scenes, being the very heart and nucleus of the gaiety and splendour of Venice. For

“Of all the places where the Carnival
 Was most facetious in the days of yore,
 For dance, and song, and serenade, and ball,
 And masque, and mime, and mystery, and more
 Than I have time to tell now, or at all,
 Venice the bell from every city bore.”

In the evil days which have now fallen on the city, the square of St. Mark is principally peopled with Austrian soldiers (*ça va sans dire*), and pigeons. These pigeons have been recognised occupants of the spot since a time whence, in the beautiful language of the law, “the memory of man runneth not to the contrary,” and they have always been under the protection of the public. They reminded me of the tame pigeons of the sanctuary which play so prominent a part in the plot of Euripides’ *Ion*.

Perhaps you never suspected that the Pantaloon of our Christmas pantomimes derives his name from the lion of St. Mark. But he does. In this way. The Lion of St. Mark was the standard of the Venetian republic, and Venice was called “*Pianta leone*,” “the lion-planter,” for a reason which Byron will tell you.

“In youth she was all glory,—a new Tyre,—
 Her very by-word sprung from victory,
 The “Planter of the lion,” which through fire
 And blood she bore o’er subject earth and sea;
 Though making many slaves, herself still free.”

Now the Pantaloon of the earliest Italian Comedy was a Venetian burgher. He was originally dressed, as you see by this picture, in a manner similar to that from which a well-known article of modern dress has derived its name. There is a church at Venice, the tower of which is shown in Burford’s panorama, dedicated to St. Pantaleone.

Now I am not going to say a word about the “storied walls,” or antiquities, or art-treasures, or history, or the architectural magnificence, of Venice, or of its glorious triad, Titian, Tasso, and Tintoretto, simply because those subjects are too wide to be touched upon this evening. We have to be back at Cuckfield, you know, by nine o’clock, and anybody who has been to Venice,

and is not a mere barbarian or an Austrian, ought to be able to write a clothes' basket full of MS. about Tintoretto only. If you wish to know the history of Venice, you may gratify that desire by devoting a very pleasant half hour any one of these evenings to a little book called "Venice," which is on these shelves. Perhaps, however, you may like to know at once how the place came to be built in so strange a situation, whether it was that it drifted somehow out to sea, or whether it popped up ready-made to the surface like the island of Delos did, to the utter conflagbergastation, no doubt, of the Mr. Wyld and other map sellers of the period who were in business at the date of its debüt. No; Venice did not make so startling a first appearance as that. In the fourth century, when Attila, king of the Huns, and called "the scourge of God," ravaged the north part of

Italy, many of the inhabitants abandoned their country, and took refuge in the islands of the Adriatic Sea. There they drove in piles for the foundations of houses, and built—Venice. Sea air seemed to suit the constitution of the state which they established, for the republic became great in wealth and power. The government was not by any means what we in England should consider a good one, for though nominally a republic, it was practically an aristocratic oligarchy. The chief magistrate was the Doge, who was so subjected to the will of his council that he seems to have been much more of a state slave, or prisoner, than a ruler. For example, he was forbidden to go to the mainland, or, as it might very properly be expressed, go ashore, without leave, and if this were refused, he suffered of course the precise identical hardship which drove the crew of the *Princess*

Royal to mutiny at Portsmouth some weeks ago. He was also liable to another grave inconvenience, namely, that of having his eyes put out if he didn't happen to please his turbulent subjects. For the Venetians of old had a nasty trick of "serving out" in this barbarous manner any Doge whose proceedings didn't happen to meet with their approbation. If you read the history of Venice, you will find that out of about forty Doges elected during a period of four centuries, nearly one half were either killed, or had their eyes put out, or were compelled to retire to some remote convent. He played a better part however, to judge from the historical pictures in the Doges' palace at Venice, in public pageants. On these occasions he was dressed in magnificent robes, as you see in this picture, and in fact fulfilled analogous duties to those

of another state functionary known to the household arrangements of our domestic life as “the bright poker.” Every year he conducted a ceremony termed “wedding the Adriatic” by being rowed out to sea in his state barge called the Bucentaur, of which this is a picture, and dropping a ring into the sea with the words “Desponsamus te, mare, in signum veri perpetuique dominii.” “We espouse thee, O sea, in token of real and perpetual dominion.” I forbear to make the remark that more genial Mare-s might be found, far better calculated to satisfy one’s matrimonial aspirations. The idea therefore contained in the well-known line of “Beautiful Venice the Bride of the Sea,” isn’t quite consistent with what is implied in the ceremonial referred to, since, of course, with the slight exception of “the dashing white serjeant,” the parties to a wedding can’t both be

brides. It seems to me to have been an extremely childish proceeding. At least, if one of our Sussex farmers were to take so strange a whim into his head as to bury a ring in his field every spring, and talk some rubbish over it in Latin about marrying the land, such a piece of extravagance would very properly result in his consignment to the County Lunatic Asylum.

The Venetian republic was finally overthrown by Napoleon. Since then, poor Venice has been, as you know, subject to Austrian rule, which is equivalent to saying that it has been groaning under a dull, heavy, senseless, tyranny, without the slightest susceptibility of humanized feeling, without the least regard for any buildings or monuments which form the objects of reverence or interest to cultivated minds, with no idea of government beyond obtaining money

by fraud or oppression, and whose only language is the bayonet. Austrian government, indeed, seems to me, after observing its action in its German and Hungarian, as well as its Italian provinces, to be simply the greatest evil, and the worst obstacle to human progress, which exists. Perhaps there may be no particular grammar to speak of in some of the last sentences, but on such a subject it is difficult to write with that calm equanimity which the shaping of symmetrical literary periods requires. It is devoutly to be hoped that the revolution which must be expected will come, and that right early. Owing to the Austrian incubus by which it is depressed, Venice is of all triste cities the most lowspirited. There are no theatres, "no nothing." The rich people have left it, as the Austrians are unbearable, so the shops there (and you

will remember it was once the richest emporium of Europe) are hardly equal to those of Chichester or Hastings. The palaces which one has heard so much of are dilapidated and scaly to the last degree, and if its present political blight should continue, Venice will soon come to be a wilderness of decayed and mouldering tenements, inhabited by a horde of dull and dirty barbarians in the Austrian uniform, keeping down about half their own number of discontented and desperate beggars.

I said Venice was triste. Fancy what a residence in a town absolutely devoid of newspapers must be to one accustomed to London Clubs, and to whom *The Times* and *The Saturday Review* are as the breath of his nostrils, and to whom the end of a week without its *Era* is as difficult a thing to imagine as a German with a

clean shirt. It is a blank such as an admirer of the fair sex would have experienced on going to stay with St. Senanus. I rather imagine that Venice was in a state of siege at the time of my visit, so perhaps its condition of literary starvation may have been a little more deplorable than usual just then. However that may have been, it is certain that all newspapers containing any intelligence relating to Italy were strictly prohibited, and since every periodical publication in the world was at that time almost wholly surrendered to this particular topic, it may be conceived how we were off for news! I did, indeed, procure a Venetian paper, the circulation of which was permitted because it was free from reference to the forbidden topic, but my motive in its purchase was simply that of curiosity to see what it could be like. It was a very small sheet, something like a London playbill, only

shorter, and of a vivid green, and its leading article on the weather, or some equally unexciting subject, was as meek as Austrian jealousy could desire. A newspaper which eschews the only topic which anybody cares to read about, corresponds very closely to the proverbial "HAMLET! (omitting the part of the Prince of Denmark)." Nay, it was actually worse than that. For in the course of a somewhat extended experience of theatrical performances, I have actually known the play of Hamlet almost wholly relieved of its principal part, which was probably found somewhat oppressive by the gentleman who "did" the leading tragic business of the house. However, to make matters all square with us, the audience, the course of the performance received an unexpected embellishment in the shape of "Mr. Smithers with the Chinese dance," which he

executed in a very gratifying manner. The Austrian government provided us with no such compensating advantage in the privation of our legitimate literary food. Talking of Hamlet reminds me of having mentioned that the theatres were shut up at Venice. This was a consequence of the general ruin and bankruptcy which prevailed, but had things been otherwise, it is most likely that the A.1. of all intellectual and cheerful amusements would have been prohibited by the government. For everything beyond mere simple existence, and that in a slavish and unworthy form alone, is forbidden. If you were to sneeze, it would not be at all surprising to learn that an Imperial ordinance had been violated thereby, and a penalty incurred, or at least that your passport required a fresh visa upon the occurrence. In the absence however of the regular drama, the cravings of

an imperious theatrical appetite could be in some degree cheated into quiescence, if not satisfied, by the *irregular* drama. For at Venice there are little peripatetic theatres, like our Punch and Judys, but with tiny painted scenes, so pretty and effective that one might imagine oneself to be contemplating real bowers of Lilliput, or admiring chef d'œuvres of Beverley through an opera glass turned the wrong way. And there is a row of regular footlights, only so small that they look like fairy lanterns, or a sparkling chain of diamonds, or a procession of glowworms. The performers are marionettes, who play, or, are played, so well, that many actors of a larger mould, though quite as wooden-headed, would do well to learn the rudiments of gesture from them. I brought home a corps dramatique of this kind in my portmanteau, and here they are. Each of these

costumes has an interesting history of its own which I cannot go into here. If you want a hearty laugh, read the description of the Genoese marionettes in Dickens' "Pictures from Italy," which of course is in this room. Sacred dramas are often done on these duodecimo stages, in which the most solemn scenes of the Gospel history are introduced. You must not suppose that there is any profanity in this practice. To minds differently constituted from our own it constantly happens that things of all kinds appear in a totally different light from that in which we should regard them. In the "Juif Errant" which was played a few years ago at the principal Opera House at Paris, there are scenes which it would be impossible to describe to you without incurring the imputation of irreverence, while by the French they were simply regarded as so many vivid tableaux

illustrative of sacred truths, and useful on Horace's principle that

“Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus, et quæ
Ipse sibi tradit spectator,”

which may be translated, roughly enough, but effectively, by “the shortest cut to a man's brain is through his eyes.” And though I am very far indeed from wishing to set forth the French as models of reverential feeling, yet English people are apt to be too hasty and self-confident in condemning foreigners whose habits of thought they cannot enter into, simply because their ways are not as our ways. It is perhaps not altogether impossible that a Frenchman might hint something or other, which occurs to myself, though I shall not propound it here, in connection with our oratorios, and Bible tea meetings, and Surrey Music Hall preach-

ments, and the like, which we might not be able quite conveniently to gainsay. Perhaps you may not be aware that the earliest dramatic representations which took place in England were in the nature of acted fables, and were called "miracle plays," or "mysteries," and afterwards, "moralities." Churches were considered to be the proper places for these entertainments, and they were used for the purpose.* Puppet plays are also of very ancient date in England. They were called "motions." With them also themes from the Bible and stories from the lives and legends of Saints were the most general subjects of representation, as you will see if you refer, for example, to the fourth act and the second scene of Winter's

* Dodsley's Old Plays, new edition, vol i. page 43 et seq.

It is unnecessary to remind anyone who has heard that there is such a thing as French literature, that Victor Hugo's Notre Dame contains a graphic account of the representation of an old morality.

Tale, where Shakespeare makes Autolycus say "Then he compassed a motion of the prodigal son," &c. One of the most popular motions, as we find from Ben Johnson's "Every man out of his humour," was "Nineveh with Jonas and the Whale." Another favourite was "Babylon." The Puritans, though they anathematised play-houses with prodigious gusto, do not seem to have objected to what was called a "holy performance." Scriptural motions seem not to have finally disappeared till fifty or sixty years ago, and the till lately current joke of Punch popping out his head from behind the side curtain and addressing the Patriarch in his ark, while the floods were pouring down, with "hazy weather, Master Noah!" may possess an interest as being possibly the last surviving trace of an old "motion."

Since the above episode on theatrical archæ-

ology was written, an article has appeared in *The Saturday Review* (of January 14th, 1860), on the subject of the Sunday evening services at the Britannia Theatre, and headed with the witty title of “Deus ex machinâ.” Its first paragraph is so illustrative of the matter which we have got upon, that I am tempted to import it bodily into my text. It is as follows.

“The English Sunday is proverbially a dull thing, and of late attempts have been made in various quarters to put a little life into the institution. The special Sunday services, especially those at St. Paul’s—where the congregation becomes an audience, without feeling it to be part of their duty to join in worship—were avowedly instituted as an improvement on those of Exeter Hall, which in their turn owed their inspiration to the successful performances of Mr. Spurgeon at the Surrey Music Hall. In all

these Sunday amusements there is a concealed dramatic element. It is a compromise between the theatre and the church. Perhaps there is nothing very remarkable in this. Religion has always felt that, in some way or other, the Church services should meet those great human requirements which seek, in vivid dramatic presentations, some relief from—to use a slang word—merely subjective emotions. There is always some edition or other of the Book of Sports just published. Human nature must have some reaction against Sabbatarianism, and special services are only the Protestant form which that reaction takes. The old Church, taking under its care every department of human taste, and providing in some way or other for the universal necessities of the mind, found in the miracle plays and religious pageants a means of satisfying the dramatic and thea-

trical wants of man ; and it is a fact that the modern European drama is the direct product of the mediæval religious plays. The *autos* of the Spanish school, in which Lope is the most familiar name, form the most palpable link in this curious pedigree of the stage. But the connexion between religion and the drama might be traced higher. As all schoolboys know, the Greek theatre originated in the worship of Dionysus ; and in the East, where the drama took a choric shape, the dramatic dances, even in their most sensual forms, had a religious significance. The ballet of the Paris Opera may be traced upwards to the sacred, if immodest, rites of the East ; and Müller derives the mediæval mysteries in regular descent from the Dionysian festivals of antiquity.

“This connexion between the stage and the

Church, if it presents a subject for curious historical and literary investigation, has been, however, long, and very properly, in abeyance."

In which last sentiment I most heartily concur. But I'm forgetting Venice.

Perhaps you may like to know the position of the city in a strategical point of view, since such is the condition of Europe generally, and of Austria in particular, at this moment, that the military capacities of any city take their place among its more prominent features of interest. Venice, then, would be difficult to take, on account of its inaccessibility. The water which surrounds it is, generally speaking, shallow, so shallow indeed, that even a gondola cannot skim about where it likes, but often has to make long circumbendibuses to pass from one island to another without getting aground. A large ship of war could not get up to Venice

at all, and even the smallest craft are obliged to keep carefully to the channels which are indicated by buoys. These buoys may be removed of course at five minutes' notice, and it would then be difficult for even an experienced native pilot to pick his way among the intricacies of the watery labyrinth. And there is no danger of this natural moat being bridged by a frost, and of an enemy's coming over it that way, as occurred in Holland, since the Lagune never freezes. The Austrians, however, are at this moment busily engaged in extending the considerable system of fortifications which already exists. An Austrian fortress is, usually speaking, such a thickly bristling mass of cannon that its appearance resembles, on a larger scale, the general effect of a bull-dog in my possession, who seems from the impression derived from a first glance, to be all teeth.

The celebrated glass works of Venice which are upon the island of Murano in what may be called the suburbs of the city, are well worth a visit. “Bugles,” and imitations of pearls and marbles, are made here. The following description of glass pearls is taken from *Cassell’s Illustrated Family Paper*, which, by the way, is a very good pennyworth.

“Glass pearls, though among the most beautiful, inexpensive, and common, ornaments for women now made, are produced by a very singular process. In 1656, about two hundred years ago, a Venetian named Jacquin discovered that the scales of a fish called bleak-fish, possessed the property of communicating a pearly hue to water. He found by experiment that beads dipped in this water assumed, when dried, the appearance of pearls. It proved, however, that the pearly coat, when placed outside, was

easily rubbed off, and the next improvement was to make the beads hollow. The making of these beads is carried on even to this day in Venice. The beads are all blown separately. By means of a small tube the insides are delicately coated with a pearly liquid, and a wax coating is placed over that. It requires the scales of four thousand fishes to produce half a pint of the liquid, to which small quantities of sal ammonia and isinglass are afterwards added."

I tried my hand, or rather my mouth, at a little glass-blowing, and the result, which you see in the person of this scent bottle, is not a very dazzling success, if viewed merely as a development of design in high art. It may be explained that it was constructed to fit a particular pocket which was to be allotted to its reception. When Henry III. of France visited

the glass houses of Murano in the year 1574, he was so delighted with what he saw that he is said to have ennobled all the workmen in a batch. The flasks, drinking cups, and glasses, were celebrated all over the civilized world. Besides the real beauty and purity of the Venetian crystal, it was supposed to possess a quality which was of inestimable value when the practice of poisoning was so horribly frequent. If a cup or glass was pure Venetian, it would fly into a million pieces, like a Rupert's drop, if any noxious beverage were poured into it. Such a property in a drinking vessel would prove inconvenient at the present day, since decanters and tumblers so keenly sensitive to poison would be doomed to instant and utter annihilation upon contact with such pernicious beverages as Soyer's nectar, and South African port. The latter of these preparations would seem, if

judged by the criterion of taste, to be a solution of lucifer matches in treacle and water. What ingredients can possibly have been combined to form the “nectar” is a riddle which eludes conjecture, however speculative. Its impression upon the palate may be described as that of “spoilt vinegar with a sneeze in it.” For similar reasons the Venetian glass would of course be wholly unavailable as a vehicle of that inscrutable compound of deleterious fluid elements known to the conventional language of ordinary dinner parties as “champagne.”

From Venice the ferry across the top of the Adriatic to Trieste by steamer occupies only five or six hours, and the expedition is well worth making. It is almost unnecessary to mention that at the time of my voyage in September last, the boat, like every other mortal place just then where human beings could be stowed, was

crowded with Austrian soldiers, many of them wounded. One handsome young officer among them appeared to be minus the calves of his legs. Another, to the great misfortune of the belles of Vienna, had also had his dancing days brought to a premature conclusion by a portion of one of his feet having been shot away. The fore part of the boat was filled with privates, woebegone, ragged, and wretched, to the last degree, and in respect of their physical and intellectual condition generally, in quite as low an abyss as anything one has read of Russian serfs. They lay listlessly about the deck, sleeping, or gazing at nothing with dull dreary eyes. As melancholy and spectral a cargo as Charon's "phantom ship" was ever freighted with.

Trieste is a very handsome, thriving, town. It might be twin-brother to Pesth the capital of Hungary, for it resembles it so much in

general appearance, and in several of its particular features. It is probably the cleanest place in the world, not even excepting Broek in Holland. For the houses are as spotlessly white as Delarue's note paper, and the streets are paved throughout with the most elaborate neatness. It seems to satisfy the terms of eulogistic admiration by which housemaids of imaginative impulses are wont to characterise the cleanness of their domains, when they asseverate that "you might eat your dinner off the floor anywhere." There is probably no recorded instance of a householder having availed himself of the advantage thus brought within his reach through the assiduity of his maids, by a picnic on the drawing-room carpet. The satisfactorily pure condition of Trieste is partly attributable to the circumstance that the place is continually subjected to shower baths,

or more properly speaking, douche baths, of rain, which are incident to its geographical position. For the south wind bears against the flanks of the Carnic Alps, at the feet of which the city lies, currents of heated air charged with moisture from the Adriatic, which is rapidly condensed into torrents of rain such as are rarely seen out of the tropics. At Udine, for example, which is a few miles north of Trieste and closer to the mountains, the rain-guage has shown an annual fall of from sixty to over an hundred inches of rain, which of course must "rinse out" the streets there pretty effectively. The wind at Trieste blows at times with terrific violence. If you are rash enough to venture out during a squall, there is much probability of your being caught up and whisked away like a deal shaving, without the slightest reference to any objections you may happen to entertain to the

proceeding, and with no respect whatever for your personal dignity. And your friends may anticipate your being eventually heard of at Venice or Vienna, as the case may be, according to the direction in which the hurricane may set. The inns at Trieste are famously good. The Hôtel de la Ville on the Quay is one of the handsomest and best in Europe. To walk about Trieste on a summer day is the pursuit of lionizing under difficulties, since the power of the sun, multiplied as it is by the intense reflection to which the character of the town and its environs gives the utmost effect, is indescribable. It is undesirable for a stranger in a foreign city to be struck senseless by a coup de soleil, if it can be avoided, since it is likely that during the progress of the transaction somebody or other may experience a touching gush of affection for his watch and purse. Trieste is Oriental enough in

its connections to number Greek among the Babel of languages which are spoken there. It was amusing to observe in a chemist's window a very old acquaintance, but in a new dress, namely Μακασαρ του Ρουλανδς, which is, being interpreted, Rowland's Macassar. A slight inaccuracy, however, may be detected in the form of the name so familiar to English eyes, since it will be remarked that the Greek translator has rendered it "Rowland's" and thus, as it might be said, thrown our illustrious countryman into a position of chronic genitive case.

After surveying the town, it bethought me to wander along the seashore in search of Adriatic shells for a friend, but not a single one of any description was to be found. On turning inland in despair, a path led me to a great, yellow, gaudy, and ugly, church at the top of a hill, where service was going on. But

an agreeable surprise awaited me on entering. For the whole population, as it seemed to be, of the country side, assembled there, joined in the singing, making such a rich, rushing, tide of music as was truly impressive and sublime. The tableau was picturesque, all the women having their heads and whole busts enveloped in some linen contraption brilliantly white, and each of them wore two pair of earrings. The grande tenue of the men consisted in one earring, and in a piece of geranium stuck behind one ear. Some of the more dashing swells among them sported a sort of starry firmament of tin buttons, big enough to rank as young saucepan lids.

The friars at Trieste, and in Lombardy generally, moved my indignation. If any indolent rascal there doesn't want to work, and isn't nephew to some beneficent great dignitary of

the law who will bestow upon him an office where the proportion which its duties bear to their attendant emoluments is of a very gratifying character, he turns mendicant friar. Thenceforth “he does nothing but beg, and bob in and out of a church, and cock up his hands as if praying,” and lives right royally on begging. The words marked as a quotation in the last sentence are a literal translation of the language used by a Venetian to me in descanting on the magnitude of this evil. There is a considerable colony of these friars near Trieste. Immediately on my appearing in their vicinity, they began to jingle their money-boxes, and continued to do so in an increasingly peremptory manner, and in whatever direction I moved, a box was always sliding insinuatingly under my elbow. The poor country people put in their mites with a respectful bow. It moved

my indignation so much to see them defrauded of their miserable savings by such a set of pitiless and insatiable birds of prey, that when one of the tonsured harpies made a direct appeal to me, I was compelled to relieve my mind by growling emphatically "you wicked old thief!" There was no rudeness in the observation, since he could not be supposed to understand English. Unhappily for Austria, the folly of its present Emperor is equalled only by his blind and bigoted subservience to the priesthood. Otherwise it would have been a very wholesome measure on his part to have taken the opportunity afforded by the late war of enrolling those rascally friars in one regiment, and opposing them on all occasions to the Zouaves. The bullets and cold steel of which they would then most undoubtedly have got their fill, would have been a very proper alterative for them from the brawn

and beer with which, to judge from their luminously unctuous appearance, they must be in the habit of gorging themselves.

Sailors being rendered by the nature of their occupation rough and reckless sort of fellows, are apt to denounce anything which may occur to put them out, in highly reprehensible improprieties of language. That this vice is rapidly on the wane in England is no inconsiderable national advantage. Now representatives of all nations, and of every language under the sun, meet at Trieste. So that after frequenting the port there for a short time, one would be in a position to bring out a polyglot edition of the Communion Service, for one would be brought to an acquaintance, however unwillingly, with all the most forcible and effective formulas for blowing up each and every of the multitudinous varieties of the human race.

On returning through Venice en route for Padua, it was necessary of course to put in an appearance at the passport office. The official who was presiding there had all his hair cropped down to about a quarter of an inch long, or more properly speaking, a quarter of an inch short, with the exception of a little tuft over his forehead, like the tassels which hang between the ears of cart horses, so that his head was about equally suggestive of a cocoanut and a clothes' brush. It would seem from the remarkable ugliness which is a prevailing epidemic among Austrian functionaries, that this observable characteristic by which they are distinguished must have something to do with the principle of their selection. It may easily be conceived that a red-nosed man, with a certain peculiar caked appearance about his face indicative that he entertains no prejudices in favour of washing,

without hair or whiskers, and exhibiting about his throat irregular and ambiguous symptoms of an amber-coloured fabric which may or may not have formerly been linen, doesn't altogether look very ravishing! Dickens somewhere or other speaks of somebody who was gifted with a particularly unprepossessing expression as having a countenance which in itself was amply sufficient to justify his instant execution at any moment. Should any such system of criminal jurisprudence ever come to prevail at Venice, there is but scanty hope that the officer whom I have described could be preserved to his friends. It may also be mentioned, by the way, that these presiding genii of the passport offices are for some reason best known to themselves usually attired in a complete suit of seedy black cloth, and since, being Austrian subjects, their countenances are necessarily steeped in gloom,

the impression which the general effect of their appearance conveys to the observer is that of the ghosts of starved undertakers. It would be highly incorrect to suppose them to resemble living undertakers, who are notoriously the merriest fellows that exist, and distinguished from the rest of the community by their exceeding red noses and blossomy faces. To see a party of them on their return from a professional excursion to Kensal Green, sitting on the lid of a hearse, and in the enjoyment of great buoyancy and exuberance of animal spirits, is quite a genial thing to contemplate.

Padua is the queerest, quaintest, curiourest, most unaccountable, ramshackly old ghost of a place that there can be upon earth. Fancy miles of grass-grown streets of houses mostly uninhabited, with here and there delicious little bits of trim garden, with fanciful quotations

from Virgil on the gates, and paths through interlacing vines by rapid streams, and miles upon miles of dim old arcades, with one or two mosque-like churches (here are pictures of them), in which are some of the most sumptuous shrines in Christendom, and a variety of buildings of uncouth aspect, such as can only have been designed by an insane architect after a pork supper. (Here is a picture of what is called the Town House.) And a huge dreamy old inn like the ghost of a mediæval barrack, full of archaic portraits, and pictures, and coats of arms, and medallions, and fantastic oddments, where, except for the mosquitoes, I was all alone. The landlord, a magnificent old gentleman with the stateliness of a Louis Quatorze tempered with the graceful courtesy of a Chesterfield, was quite aghast at my arrival. He said that no strangers had come there since

the war, and that no meat, or wine, or spirits, were to be had. However, I was enchanted with the whole thing in general, and with mine host in particular, and he, finding me resolutely determined to be pleased with anything and everything, became paternally affectionate forthwith. He produced his own private and cherished bottle of rum for my especial refreshment and gratification, and much I smacked my lips over the same in token of lively relish, and excessively nasty I thought it. In the event of living a little longer, it is my intention to return to the dear old Aquila d'Oro at Padua, and stay a month there, taking nothing but certain books, with a cwt. of tea and a tin of biscuits to set the landlord's mind at ease about the commissariat, and a stack of writing paper, and if the last article doesn't turn into a novel under such inspiring circumstances, I must be

pronounced to have as little imaginative genius as a cold potatoe. The only drawback to one's enjoyment at Padua is the mosquitoes, who are aggravating enough to drive a quakeress into vituperative improprieties. They came in through a crack in the window which had escaped my observation, and stung me in the hollows of my heels to an extent which brought me to the verge of distraction. And one of them, who seemed to be gifted with a portentous appetite, resorted to my eye for her supper. It is correct to say "her" supper, since the mosquitoes which sting, are, as might be expected from a certain analogy which it is unnecessary to particularise more explicitly, of the feminine gender only.

Mine host spoke with indignation and impatience of being obliged to entertain a certain number of Austrian officers who were con-

tinually billeted upon him. The same grievance exists in every town in Venetia, and a very serious one it is to the hotel keepers. For a miserably insufficient and shabby sum is allowed by the Government for these unwelcome guests, and this, too, has to be paid by the commune or district. But were it ever so large, the personal habits of Austrian officers are so disgracefully filthy, that it would be difficult to give any adequate compensation in money for the annoyance which they cause in a household. To travel with them is bad enough, addicted as they are to shag tobacco and lavish expectoration. And it is a stern trial to one's nervous susceptibilities when they pull out from somewhere about their persons long red sausages nearly as big, seriously speaking, as umbrella cases, and looking like gigantic worms, or the sandbags used to stop draughts in windows, and proceed to indulge

themselves in the gratification of nibbling thereat.

It would seem Gothic to appear by abstaining from any mention of the famous Giotto's at Padua to be ignorant of their existence. Such is not my case, but with only twenty-four hours to spend in so large, so interesting, so historical, and so picturesque a city as Padua, it would not have been by any means a "spirited policy" to have spent the time on any works of art whatever.

I never shall think without laughing of the Padua omnibus, which in point of size was quite a Noah's ark, and drawn by horses with legs as thick as if they had been those of gouty hippopotamuses. In the broad streets it wambled about in as desultory and vacillating a process of progression as was that of Mrs. Gamp after her "tea," butting its head at the houses from side to side as

if the pillars of the arcades had been ninepins which it was bent upon knocking down. And in the small streets, where its excursive impulses had to be controlled by steady driving, its getting through them at all was such a close shave that had it ventured into any one a shade narrower, it must have fitted it tight like a long plug. And the unwieldy gambols in which it indulged when it got among holes in the paving, plunging about with its bows down in the ground, and throwing up its stern behind in a grossly indecorous fashion, and then abruptly reversing this arrangement, were somewhat disconcerting to its passengers.

St. Anthony is held in the greatest veneration at Padua, and representations of him, in the form of statues and dolls, and pictures like this, are so numerous as to form the staple of the commercial activity of the place. A life of him

is sold, containing an account of a sermon which he is stated to have preached to an assembly of fish. The introduction to this very queer address is as follows. I translate it literally, omitting only a few words which are better unspoken on this occasion. “ When the heretics would not regard his preaching, he betook himself to the seashore, where the river Marecchia disembogues itself into the Adriatic. He here called the fish together that they might hear his holy words. The fish came swimming towards him in such vast shoals both from the sea and from the river, that the surface of the water was quite covered with their multitudes. They quickly ranged themselves, according to their several species, into a very beautiful congregation, and like so many rational creatures, presented themselves before him to listen. St. Antonio was so struck with the miraculous

obedience and submission of these poor animals, that he found a secret sweetness distilling upon his soul, and at last addressed himself to them in the following words." His sermon is too long to quote, and its impressiveness would be deplorably weakened by my delivery of it. Without committing the offence of making anything really connected with religion the subject of entertainment, we may very innocently laugh at the picture which the legend presents to us of devout sprats, and of a "revival" like those which have been making such a stir, extending itself to Adriatic lobsters. And one cannot help remarking that the feeling which the saint is described to have enjoyed of "a secret sweetness distilling upon his soul" sounds excessively pleasant and comfortable!

From Padua back to Verona, and thence to Mantua, of which this is a picture. The rail-

way connecting the two latter towns passes Villafranca, a village about the size of Ardinglye. The place probably scarcely knew that it was thought worth christening at all, till on waking up one fine morning in the course of last summer, it was surprised to find that it had not only a name, but a very big one indeed, which was to mean a great deal, and which was to continue for a long time to come to spoil the appetite of every Italian in whose hearing it should be mentioned. If an invasion of this country should ever take place *viâ* Brighton, this Cuckfield ridge will offer an advantageous line for the English forces to occupy, corresponding in some respects to that afforded by the Solferino heights in the defence of Venetia. In that case, a conspicuous house near a mill which crowns the apex of the heights here, will hold an analogous position to that of the tower

of Solferino, while Ardinglye, a little off to the east, will, like Villafranca, be the scene of the treaty ensuing upon the battle. Of course nobody can doubt for an instant that the French would find themselves in a widely different condition, after a course of manipulation at the hands of Sussex militia and volunteers, from what was the case when they had only to deal with starved and jaded Austrians. We should, no doubt, to use a vulgar, but very satisfactory, metaphor, "tickle their tails for them pretty handsomely." The only danger is lest our whole front ranks should be swept away by a storm of bullets from behind, emanating from the misdirected energies of the gallant and patriotic volunteers in the rear.

All the fortifications at Mantua, at the time of my visit, were in applepie order for the

reception of unbidden visitors, for when the armistice of Villafranca was made, the French were only three quarters of an hour's march from the place. Mantua is the strongest fortress in Italy, and the very nucleus of Austrian jealousy and tiresomeness. At this time, too, it was in a state of siege, which didn't make things pleasanter for travellers. My passport, which had been obliged to be specially visé for Mantua, was taken from me at the outer gates, and it was necessary to apply for it some hours afterwards at the police office, and then get it countersigned by a major of the Austrian garrison at another office. I walked out on the bridge of San Giorgio which is *within* the fortifications, merely to get a view of the town, since they will not let you go up on any tower, and on returning the same way five minutes afterwards, my passport was

demanded. This seemed so absurd that it moved me to remark to the officer in a queer compound of French and Italian, "If you intend a joke, allow me to observe that it's rather a weak one." Of course any traveller who isn't an absolute fool takes care to keep his passport strictly *en règle*, but a danger must always exist that *they* may possibly make mistakes, and that one may thus get subjected to annoyance and delay. For example, this very morning, on taking my usual precaution of glancing at what the police functionary wrote about me, it was puzzling enough to conjecture what his ugly hieroglyphics could possibly mean, till it struck me that they were intended for "Frederick," which he took for my name, the passport being headed "We, Frederick Earl of Clarendon," &c., &c. Any less careful traveller might, at such a place as Mantua, have had a world of trouble from

a trifling error like this, and yet this official was not a whit more of an imbecile blockhead than many of his compeers. For instance, the postmaster at Verona gave me a letter addressed to "General Waters", and could hardly be persuaded that it wasn't right. He held in his hand all the time my passport, one's necessary credentials at a poste restante, with the owner's name printed very clearly on the outside. But the perverse ingenuity which some people exert in making mistakes eludes all the precautions which can be taken to prevent them. So my friend baffled me by the artful device of considering William as the surname, and wholly declining to admit that any difference in English names begining with a W was perceptible. Nothing could be clearer therefore than that my unmilitary self was General Waters, and had the Duke of Wellington been pursuing the

same route, the postmaster would of course have conferred upon me the honor of an absolute identity with his Grace also. The knowledge that "Signor Guglielmo" was one of my aliases, helped me to the frequent detection of letters, &c., in letter G departments.

Some years ago, when paddling about at Killarney, I read Orsini's account of his escape from prison at Mantua, and thereupon made a stedfast resolution to go and examine the spot where so accomplished a piece of Jack Sheppardism was executed. That intention was now fulfilled. The interest, however, of the story is much weakened by a visit to the scene of action, because the opinion of the best informed people there is found to be that his gaoler was bribed, and that he came quietly enough down stairs, passed the day in the reeds of the Mincio, and at night made off to a little village about

two miles from the bridge of San Giorgio, where a carriage and horses had been for a long time kept in constant readiness to hurry him away. This is, in all probability, the true history of the matter, and the published account is simply fiction, written for a purpose which it is easy enough to discern. So also seem to have thought the Austrians, since they condemned the gaoler to twelve years' imprisonment. The little village referred to, and which is a conspicuous object from the bridge of San Giorgio, is classic ground, as the scene where Rigoletto is laid.

The Mincio is full of fish, and there were a variety of water-birds disporting themselves about its banks and shallows; among others, an exceedingly elegant kind of tern, which was new to me. There was also quite a grand exhibition of waterlilies of kinds unknown to

English waters. I sighed for some roots of them so ardently as to have been all but tempted to run the gauntlet of the sentinels' bullets which would have attended the attempt to get them. For you mustn't do any thing whatever at Mantua. The Austrians merely allow you, and that grudgingly enough, the bare right of existing in a dull and slavish manner, if you are tame enough to endure it. But between the noxious exhalations from the Mincio swamp, and the miasma of the political atmosphere, it must be rather a tough job for the Mantuans to contrive "to make a live of it" at all, as we say in Sussex.

Mantua is a burning fiery furnace in summer. The following entry occurs in my journal. "Sun so hot that I was compelled to muffle up my head and face in a handkerchief as Turkish ladies do. Not by any means, however, out of re-

gard for my complexion, which is happily unsusceptible of deterioration, since it already resembles a stiff solution of Spanish liquorice in Thames water." It was very afflicting to be surrounded on all sides by cool, clear, streams, and to be forbidden to bathe. It must be conceded, however, in some extenuation of the inhumanity of the authorities in this respect, that they were unconscious of the absolute cruelty of the prohibition. For the advantages resulting from the application of cold water to the person are of a nature which, as Germans, they have, of course, wholly failed to realize. We are not, you know, to have any history this evening, so I forbear to tell you what great swells the Dukes of Mantua were in old times, or to speak of the one name which can never be absent from the mind of a classical scholar while he breathes the air of the place where the author of the "Georgics" was born. But it

may be said “to persons about to marry,” before you furnish your drawing-room take a trip to Mantua (it will be well worth your while), and you will see in the Ducal Palace there what chandeliers ought to be, but what they clearly are not, anywhere else.

In the shops at Mantua might be observed a print of a fat and vulgar-looking party in a black velvet coat and silk tights, pourtrayed in the act of declaiming “*Essere, o non essere,*” so it may be presumed that there is a provincial star in that theatrical hemisphere who is in the habit of “doing” Hamlet. It would probably be amusing to see, except that the Frenchman’s “*Toby, or not Toby, dat is de ke-ves-te-ong,*” could hardly be equalled in comicality. Which reminds me of a fact which is sufficiently humiliating to the English stage, namely, that perhaps the best Macbeth who has been seen on

the London boards of late years was an Italian whose duty was merely to play up to Ristori's Lady Macbeth. In my opinion indeed, if he had not given the character too much of a certain Italian suppleness which would have been incompatible with the mental or physical anatomy of a Scotch chieftain, his impersonation would have saved itself triumphantly enough from the charge which is only but too well founded in ordinary representations of the part, of leaving everything to be desired.

It may be remarked in conclusion with reference to Mantua, that its broad natural features as they exist at this moment are as accurately touched off by Virgil as they are by the latest edition of Murray.

Before leaving Verona for Sardinia, it was necessary of course to pay a parting visit to the passport office. The room was crowded, and

there seemed but scanty hope of getting attended to for an hour to come, till the chief official, who was writing, happened to look up, and I recognised in him the person who had done me that good turn about the carriage at Peschiera. The involuntary exclamation on my part of "Ah! mon bienfaiteur de Peschiera!" attracted his attention, and he gave me a cordial welcome, satisfying all my little wants in a moment, a whole room-full before my proper turn, and dismissed me quite in a genial glow of amiability and satisfaction. He must have been born in Italy, and pressed against his will into the Austrian service. It was quite a satisfaction to get out of the Austrian provinces, and the ever-present sense of the dreary and sullen tyranny which oppresses them like a leaden nightmare, if such an animal be known to zoologists. The only principles known to

the Imperial rule are selfishness and violence. Austria produces no great men. In default of anything better, she ought at least to have a decently good army. But the officers are all swagger and inefficiency, and the common soldiers are rendered almost incapable of fighting through the mismanagement which prevails in the supply of necessaries. Incapable, that is, of fighting, even if they wished it, which in such a service of course they don't. And the dogged, unintelligent, courage which they unquestionably possess will not enable them to withstand the dashing onslaught and impetuosity of the Zouaves. That an empire in such a condition of apparent collapse can continue to exist for any long time seems happily impossible.

After denouncing the Austrian rule as one of the most insupportable evils which afflicts humanity,

it is perhaps imprudent to speak in the next sentence of the passport system, lest one should incur the imputation of having allowed one's views of a great empire in its really material aspects to receive a colouring from the petty annoyances which beset a traveller there. There is not a shadow of foundation for any such charge in my case. But it may be confessed that the sedulous attention which the Imperial Government pays to the minutest affairs of everybody who comes within its reach, is not by any means gratifying to the objects of such solicitude. In places like Mantua you seem to be asked for an account of yourself about every ten minutes, and it would not be at all surprising to find oneself in difficulties for having sneezed without having one's passport properly visé for that purpose. I made the very natural inquiry of an Austrian official there whether

they asked the swallows for their passports on their arrival in the spring, but no answer was vouchsafed to me on the point. These incessant orders to “stand and deliver” your credentials become tiresome at last. At the time of my visit however, as has been already mentioned, Mantua was in a state of siege. One breathes more freely on finding oneself again on Sardinian soil, where mean and irritating jealousy and inquisitiveness are unknown, passports exist not, and where you may be John Bright, or Kossuth, or Drs. Smethurst, or Cumming, or any other objectionable character, without molestation, provided you behave yourself.*

* “The extreme limit of toleration seems to be reached in England, where so low and mischievous a caitiff as the Editor of *The Record* newspaper must be, is allowed to pass unchastised. The cool insolence with which he publishes and censures the doings of private families for the sake of injuring those who to their infinite credit and happiness are opposed to the pretensions of “The truly pious” (in *The Record* point of view), is such as could only be met by expostulation of a local character. Take, as chance examples of this sort of thing, the two last numbers of that publication, those, namely for January 30, and February 1, 1860.

My return from Verona to Milan happened to be on the eighth of September, which is the fête of the Virgin, and a grand festival throughout Italy. The railway near the stations was fringed with crowds of country people who squauked and howled at the top of their lungs when the train came in, and when it moved away. My ingenuity proved unequal to the task of detecting wherein the secret lay of the high gratification which this pastime evidently afforded to them. Perhaps one gets too much blasé with the feverish and excited forms of pleasure which are incident to metropolitan life to have any taste left for the innocent and simple enjoyment of howling at nothing.

A visit to Milan on the eighth of September is much to be recommended, particularly if the date should happen to follow closely upon the termination of a series of military triumphs.

On this occasion every individual house in the whole city, and every window of it, was prettily illuminated. There were lamps, and candles, and flags, and transparencies, and mottoes, without end. The streets were crowded, quite plethorically so, with people in a high state of jollity. And bands of men paraded about, singing patriotic songs with tremendous energy. But the grand spectacle of all was the Cathedral, illuminated up to its very highest point by lights placed behind the pinnacles, which gave it the undefined splendour of a palace of enchantment. And the statue, whoever it may represent, which stands on the tip top of the spire, was made to brandish for the nonce the Sardinian flag. Every hotel was crammed full from the attic to the cellar. Some fellow travellers and myself drove to all the inns in succession, till my state of exhaustion was so

great as to suggest the anticipation that my earthly pilgrimage was destined to close in that Milan omnibus. Such was our desperation, that we were reduced to beg to be taken in (it would indeed have been “taken in and done for”) at a sinister looking little public house called “The Three Jews” in some dreadful slum or other. But they would not have us even there. Having an acquaintance at Milan, I was compelled to make an unseasonable call upon him, for it was now midnight, to beg his assistance. He sent me with a servant and a recommendation to the funniest little out-of-the-way inn in the world, quite as difficult to find as Todgers’, or the North-West Passage, and rejoicing in a name which means, being translated from the Italian, “The Little Hen Sparrow.” There they contrived a refuge for me for the night. It proved a comfortable little place enough, with

the single drawback of the dirt of the coffee room, which was so deep that any cleaning thereof must have assumed the character of a process of excavation.

From Milan for a couple of days to Como, but the entrancing beauties of that lovely lake are not such as could be made the matter of amusing description for you. It may be mentioned however for the benefit of any of you who are fond of flowers, and who may happen to go there, that you will find among the woods with which the banks are clothed a dark lilac cyclamen so sweet that—well—to do justice in words to the fragrance of a flower seems to be as impracticable as the proverbial impossibility of describing the taste of champagne. Perhaps one might say in both cases “intoxicatingly sweet.”

Never omit in a foreign town to visit some

one of the burying grounds attached to it. You will find that the character and genius of any people is vividly illustrated by the style of their sepulchral monuments and inscriptions. There is a large cemetery on one of the heights above Como. The ascent to it is rendered unpleasant by several of those disgraceful and obscene exhibitions, so common in Germany, of chapels full of skulls and bones of people who died in some plague. The skulls of the priests are distinguished by the mouldering remains of their clerical hats, which gives them a grim, and at the same time a grotesque, effect. The last new grave in the cemetery was that of a son of Garibaldi's who was killed near Como in the late war. The name, displayed in a shrine of laurels and Sardinian flags, was in itself a sufficiently eloquent funeral oration. Sentiment of any kind cannot fail to acquire a new or

increased beauty when the melodious Italian language becomes the vehicle of its expression. Independently of the advantage which the epitaphs at the Como cemetery thus possessed, as compared with English ones, they were in much better taste than the extravagant and fulsome praises of the departed which prevail upon so many of the tombstones in our burying grounds. The most favourite epitaph in our country churchyards, about the deceased being now walking on Canaan's happy shore, and the rest of it—you all know its terms, is of course open to one obvious and strong objection among others, namely, that it assumes to speak in a tone of presumptuous assurance of what cannot possibly be said with absolute certainty by any one human being of any other. The three emblematical tears graven in stone to which the French are so partial, were not to be seen on

these Como monuments. They always seem to me to be an unfortunate form of emblem of grief, since when they are of the long straight kind they are so apt to remind one of the streamers which descend when a rocket has burst, while if the curly pattern is adopted, they are but too inevitably suggestive of tadpoles in a state of active wriggle. An epitaph of a few words only, upon some young girl, struck me as pretty. It was

“Al fiore di bellezza e di virtù.”

I shall not translate that for you, since it is unfair to anything in the nature of sentiment to put it into a foreign dress, and most especially would it be so when the change would have to be from Italian to English. It occurred to me that this epitaph would form a good inscription for an offering, such as a ring or the

like, given by a lover to the object of his affections, since he, no doubt, would consider its terms to be applicable to her case, whatever opinion might be entertained by other people upon the point.

You must now, if you please, take a seven-league-boots' stride to Alessandria (here, on the map) which was lately so familiar a name as being the second in importance of the Sardinian fortresses. The town is surrounded by an earthen rampart of so great an extent that it would take a large army to defend it. There are not more than two guns to every quarter of a mile of bank. The citadel, which is not very extensive, but strong, is on the opposite bank of the river Tanaro. Three or four hours of railway take you from Alessandria to Genoa (here, on the map) and it is a happy journey to make,

for the former place is a miserable beast of a town, while the latter is a paradise.

Genoa lies at the feet of the Ligurian Apennines, which run up into sharp irregular peaks behind and above it. Each of these is crowned by its own separate fort. Behind these succeed a series of similar, but higher, peaks, extending for some miles inland. The belt of fortifications has a circuit of about seven miles. Since each of these forts is a perfectly independent stronghold in itself, and it is also incapable of being battered or stormed, a hostile advance upon Genoa from the land side would be a formidable undertaking, while supposing an enemy to have gained possession of the place from the sea, the plunging fire of shot and shell which would plump upon him from the heights on all sides, would render the town and harbour much too hot to hold him.

Genoa is one of the most beautiful cities of the world, both in point of building and situation. These views will give you a more vivid notion of its appearance than could be gathered from any verbal description, though a few words of the poet Gray may be quoted on the subject. He says “Figure to yourself a vast semi-circular basin full of fine blue sea and vessels of all sorts and sizes, some sailing out, some coming in, and others at anchor ; and all around, palaces and churches peeping over one another’s heads, gardens and marble terraces full of orange and cypress trees, fountains, and trellis-work covered with vines.” Genoa is like Bath, and human life, all ups and downs, and the pavement of the streets is particularly slippery. Consequently, except in a few streets which run horizontally along the side of the hill, horses can scarcely be used. The mules which are substituted for

them as beasts of burden are provided with leather boots to give them a better foothold, and in these they contrive to scuffle up and down without breaking their noses.

You know perhaps that Genoa, in common with Malta and Calcutta, has a speciality for the manufacture of filigree ornaments. Here are some specimens of the work. The material of which they are composed is silver, but as that is so apt to tarnish, it is usually gilt. The trade in marionettes seems also to be brisk. The most desirable mementos to carry away from any place which one visits are of course whatever productions may happen to be peculiar to the locality. So that a traveller of any gumption will give but a contemptuous glance at the refuse trinkets from the Palais Royal which are displayed in the Rue des Orfèvres, and lavish his substance on filigree and marionettes. A lady

at the table d'hôte at our hotel asked me one day how I had spent my morning. "Wrote letters, and then went shopping." "What did you buy?" "Half a pint of jewellery, and nine and thirty dolls." She laughed, but it was literally true. The dolls however were the more triumphantly successful investment. The French and English custom-house officers did certainly appear to consider that the contents of my port-manteau embraced some rather unusual elements.

I shall say nothing more about Genoa, partly because it is so admirably described in a little illustrated history of the place which is in this room, as well as in Dickens' "Pictures from Italy," without which this library could not properly consider itself a library at all, but also for another reason, namely, that I hope to give the subject of Genoa a lecture all to itself on some future occasion.

If you have a taste for getting into difficulties at sea, allow me to recommend to you a trip by a mercantile screw steamer from Genoa to Marseilles. The passage however is somewhat tediously long, unless there happens to be somebody or something on board to manufacture fun out of. My first voyage, some years ago, was by a boat loaded with hay up to half the height of the funnel. My fellow passengers were a Russian lady and her servants, some American sailors, and a number of rough fellows from Leghorn with skins like chesnuts or very old mahogany, and in very inadequate costume—about as much as men are obliged to wear at watering places to bathe in. They looked extremely like models of Italian sailors done in terra-cotta. These gentry lay in a state of what some author or other calls “slumb’rous inertness” on the hay, their possession of any vital

energies whatever being betrayed only by the assiduity with which they smoked short clay pipes. So that Lord Dundonald's achievement of steering a ship loaded with combustibles into a hostile port was a tame and common-place proceeding as compared with the risk which we, with our hay, ran from a stray spark from the funnel, or the Livornians' pipes. The Russian lady, when we got into rough water, began to look very sorry for herself, and well she might, if a complexion to the last degree unwholesome may be viewed as a legitimate subject of regret. She subsequently passed through all the stages of verdure from that of an opening primrose to a laurel leaf, and her descending gradations of mental anguish appeared to correspond with remarkable precision to the darkening hues of her complexion. Her deepening groans, too, preserved a due consonance of degree with these vicissi-

tudes. I was called upon, as the only interpreter on board, to arbitrate between the Yankee sailors and the steward, who was alleged by them to have charged some exorbitant price for every "male o' groob." To appraise the value of the dishes supplied involved an inspection of their remains, which was as repulsive a duty as "viewing the body" at a coroner's inquest. For the delicacies in question were of that "strong" description in which nautical taste is so addicted to revel, such as, for example, rich combinations of red herring and fat bacon set afloat in a fluid of a very pronounced oleaginous character. The gratitude of the Yankees for "taxing their costs" found expression in cordial invitations to me to "bakker" and "licker" with them. Rum and quids however had to be declined, since what with the tumbling of the vessel in a head sea, and the vibration of the screw, elaborate

circumspection was rendered necessary to avoid getting started on a course of indisposition which it might have been very difficult to arrest. We arrived at Marseilles a day or two overdue, and then the captain being absorbed in gallivantation with some Genoese beauty who had been confided to his protection, inadvertently went ashore with our passports in his pocket, in consequence of which we were not allowed to leave the ship for ever so long. So if anathemas ever take effect, that functionary must have gone to the extremely bad. A sort of literary bouquet might have been gathered on the occasion comprising all the choicest flowers of invective which may be culled from the French, Italian, Russian, and English, dictionaries, the whole being bound together with a tasty collection of Yankee expletives of remarkable force and vigour. Such was my first voyage from

Genoa to Marseilles. If you can contrive to keep awake two minutes longer, you shall hear about my second trip.

We set sail in the middle of the day on a Wednesday in a French mercantile screw steamer. It was so "crank," that is, inclined to tip, that the motion was enough to make one giddy while she was still at her moorings in the snuggest recess in the harbour, and before we were half a dozen miles from the port it was all one could possibly do to hold on by the gunwale. It has been my fortune to sail in queer boats enough goodness knows ! English, French, Belgian, Austrian, and Dutch, and in all sorts of weathers, and some of them did unquestionably achieve some remarkably odd antics ! In particular there was a Dutch institution which used to ply between London and Rotterdam which was given to plunge about in heavy seas as a

drunken whale might be conceived to do. It is proper to speak of it as “an institution,” since it would be a misnomer to call such a structure a boat. It was the shape of a soap dish, and much about as fat and plethoric as Primrose Hill. It possessed an interest of its own, when contemplated in an archæological point of view, as an example of the comical productions of the early ages of shipbuilding. But none of the gymnastics ever achieved by that most pernicious of old tubs, to the signal discomfiture and conflagbergastation of its unlucky passengers, can be named in comparison with the astonishing escapades of this Mediterranean screw. It seemed to stand alternately on stem and stern, and kept rolling over on its beam ends first on one side then on the other with such rapidity and violence that it was difficult to avoid being shot overboard. If it had turned a summerset in

the air and come down on its keel again, it would not have been in the least surprising! This extravagance of behaviour was sustained in a greater or less degree till Friday at midnight, just thirty-five hours, when we exchanged these rough vagaries for a mild seesaw in the Joliette harbour at Marseilles, till they let us disembark at six the next morning. It only amused and appetized me, but the other passengers were more dead than alive all the time. These were principally Italians of the humblest class, who lay flat on the deck in such a state of abject filth and misery as was hideous to see and is impossible to describe. In the language of the article on predestination “in the wretchlessness of extreme desperation.” It blew so violently, and our steam power was so weak, that it seemed several times likely that we should be forced into what an Irishman would have called “pro-

gressing backwards" towards Genoa. The unspeakable dirt and disorder which are encountered on board some foreign mercantile vessels are not to be conceived by those who have only sailed by English ships. I employed an hour or two of comparative calm when we were under the shelter of the headlands off Toulon, in giving an Italian an English lesson out of "As you like it." He, as other foreigners have done before under corresponding circumstances, asked me how to pronounce "Walter Scott" and "The Archbishop of Canterbury," and what is the precise signification of "G—— d——." For the sake of our national credit I always tell them that the last named formula of expression is an interjectional benediction of peculiar fervency, so it is to be hoped my pupils won't adopt that particular mode of conveying their acknowledgments to any English benefactors to

whom they may wish to make a graceful expression of their sense of the magnitude of obligations conferred upon them! My hat got thoroughly saturated with sea water from the constant swosh of spray, and consequently, when it got dry, became so hard, and brown, and salt, and shiny, that it would have cut up into very tolerable red herrings.

It only remains to show you a few more "oddments" which turned up on the unpacking of my portmanteau on getting home. These. Some Austrian pieces of copper so infinitesimally small in value that one might almost conceive a Scotchman being led to give one away in charity. A portrait of the King of Sardinia, and his pedigree, showing his connexion with the royal house of England. He seems, as far as I can make out, to be somewhere about hundredth cousin ever so many times

removed, to our Queen. But any connexion, however faint and shadowy, with so admirable a lady as that, is a thing to be made out if possible, and to be proud of. The most prominent feature in the portraits of Victor Emmanuel is his prodigious moustache, of which the British public is kept in lively remembrance by that hairdresser's everlasting advertisement of his "Sardinian pomade," accompanied as it is with a pictorial illustration of the results of the preparation in question as they are to be observed in his majesty. If all the marvellous things were true that advertising barbers say of their specifics for eliciting and coaxing hair out of places where it had previously formed no intention of coming up, the conversion of a wooden peg into a shaving brush by anointing one end of it with a dab of Macassar oil would be a very simple matter. This is a likeness of the Princess

Clotilde of Sardinia who married Prince Napoleon last spring. Unless her portraits misrepresent her, she must have an uncomfortable expression as if something had disagreed with her. Since her marriage, if report be true, something has indeed done so in a deplorable manner. These dolls give accurate facsimiles of the uniforms of a French soldier of the line, Zouave, and Grenadier, respectively. The Turcos are dressed just like the Zouaves, except that they have blue petticoats instead of red. Here is an Austrian private in the familiar white and blue uniform. Many regiments are attired in sky-blue inexpressibles of such agonizing tightness that to say merely that these pantaloons fit the wearer like his skin is to convey but a weak and inadequate notion of the closeness of the hug which they give him. They make his legs look as squeezed-up and hard as if they were

wooden legs painted blue, or as if he had borrowed a pair from a blue washing stand or some other article of furniture. He must either be born in them, or else put them on once for all at some early period of his history, since the idea of attempting the enterprise of getting into such things, or of getting them off without a surgical operation, would be a wild and chimerical absurdity.

Paris on my return to it looked like the stage of a theatre after a transformation scene, as it was full of pantomime properties in the way of gilt angels and the like, put up for the occasion of the marching in of "the army of Italy."

The old letters of which this lecture in fact consists were written, as the familiarity of their tone would of itself indicate, without the slightest view to the sort of publicity which they have now received. It never occurred to

me while abroad to take any notes for a lecture on North Italy, and I should not have thought of giving one, had not some members of the Committee pressed it. But having now learnt that a trip to the Continent may be made the means of giving me the pleasure of meeting you here afterwards, I shall always be ready, as often as sufficient money and time to spare are forthcoming, to exclaim with Dr. Syntax,

“I’ll make a tour, and then I’ll write it.”

THE END.

To Venice and Back
in an Hour.



1860.



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